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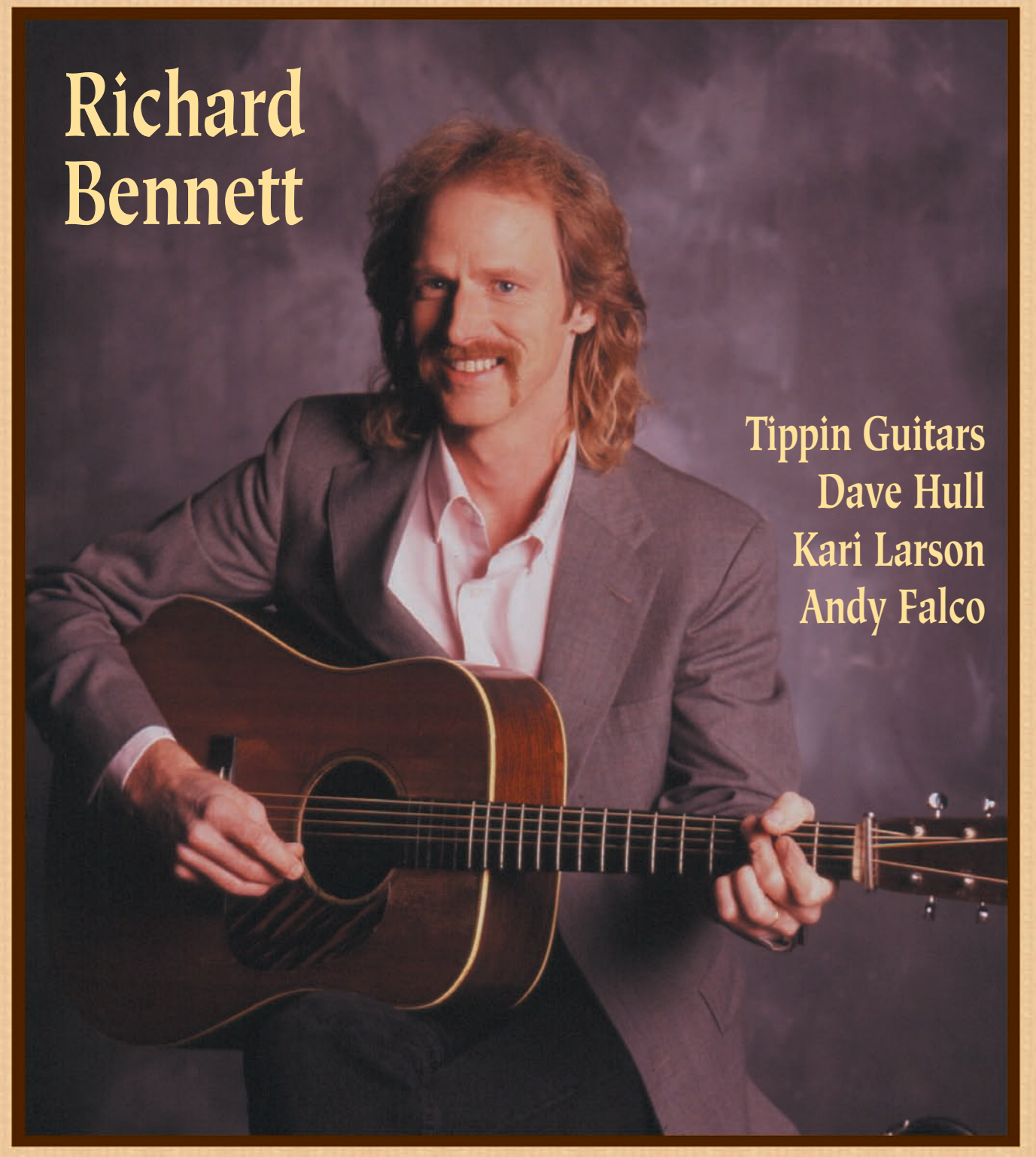
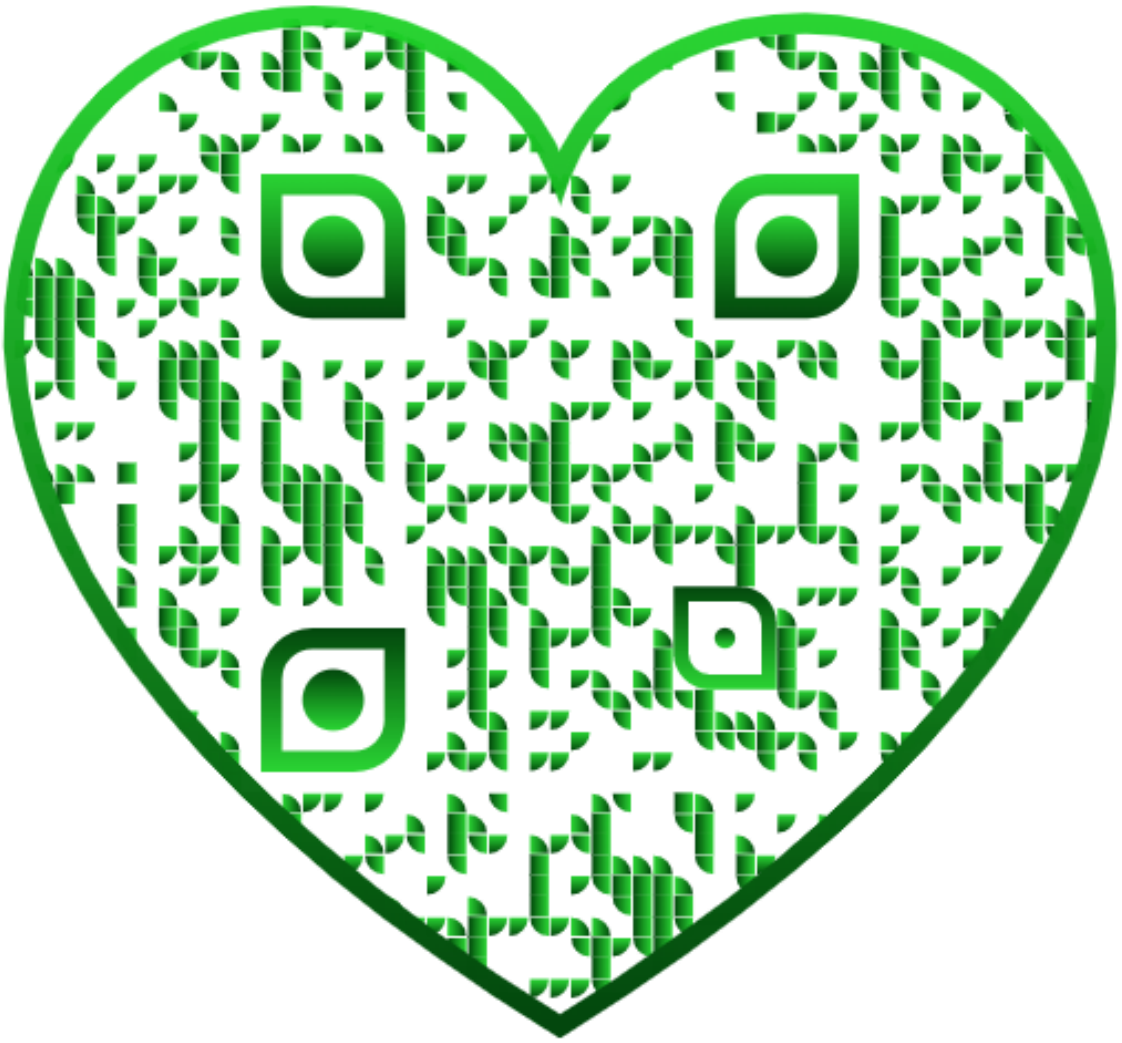
Volume 5, Number 1 November/December 2000





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CONTENTS

FEATURES

Richard Bennett 4
Flatpick Profile: Hull and Larson 17
Tippin Guitars 27
Winfield 2000 29
Star Spangled Guitar 33
Jam Tunes: "Little Rock Getaway" 39
Winfield, Contests & Me 48
On the Web 58
A Day In Genoa with Beppe Gambetta 76

COLUMNS

St. Anne's Reel 12
Craig Vance
Peter Rowan: Northern Bluegrass Boy 15
Joe Carr
Maintenance & Repair: Strap Buttons 21
Frank Ford
Flatpicking & Folk/Acoustic Rock 23
John Tindel
Kaufman's Corner: "Clarinet Polka" 30
Steve Kaufman
Break Time: Connector Licks 34
Chris Jones
Nashville Flat Top: B Lick Library 36
Brad Davis
The O-Zone: "Fire On The Mountain" 42
Orrin Star
"Storms Are On The Ocean" 45
Dix Bruce
Music Theory: Mastering the Fingerboard 50
Mike Maddux
Gospel Guitar: "Angesl We Have Heard On High" 54
Harold Streeter
New Tunes For Flatpicking: "Obadiah Johnson" 56
Bill Bay
Flatpicking Fiddle Tunes: The Lark of the Irish 59
Adam Granger
Exploring Bluegrass Guitar: The Blues in Bluegrass II 61
Steve Pottier
Eclectic Acoustic: "This Moment Is Your Home" 63
John McGann

DEPARTMENTS

New Release Highlight: Andy Falco 65
Reviews 69

How to Duplicate & Promote an Acoustic CD Release

1. **Send your music to radio.** No matter how you define your goals, you need to get your music to folk radio. One excellent way to do this is through a **radio-oriented sampler CD program**, such as the OASISACOUSTIC™ sampler CDs, which get the music of Oasis clients to hundreds of key radio stations throughout the U.S.

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EDITOR'S PAGE

Doc Watson Inducted into IBMA Hall of Honor

The International Bluegrass Music Association (IBMA) has announced that they will induct Doc Watson into their Bluegrass Hall of Honor. The induction will take place at the 11th annual International Bluegrass Music Awards, scheduled for Thursday, October 19, at the Kentucky Center for the Arts in Louisville, KY. Doc is in distinguished company with the prior recipiants including: Bill Monroe, Lester Flatt, Earl Scruggs, Don Reno, Red Smiley, The Stanley Brothers, Mac Wiseman, Jimmy Martin, The Osborne Brothers, Josh Graves, Chubby Wise, Kenny Baker, and others.

New Chris Jones CD

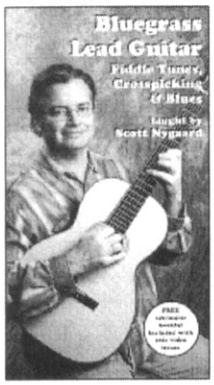
Chris Jones recently released a new CD on Rebel records titled *Just A Drifter*. Mariann and I attended a pre-release party near Nashville where Chris and an all-star cast performed songs from the CD and sold pre-release copies of the new recording. For more information and some photos of the party, visit the News and Reviews section of our web site. The official release date of the CD is scheduled for late October and the official album release party will be held at the Station Inn in Nashville.

Brad Davis and Whitewater Extravaganza

Brad Davis and his bluegrass band Whitewater held a huge "invitation only" party at the Gibson Showcase in Nashville on September 28th. The 450+ crowd was treated to a prime rib dinner and Whitewater show. The show was preceded by a video taped introduction of the band by Marty Stuart. Whitewater followed their Thursday night party by a Friday night appearance on WSM's Opry Spotlight and a Saturday night performance on the Grand Ole Opry.

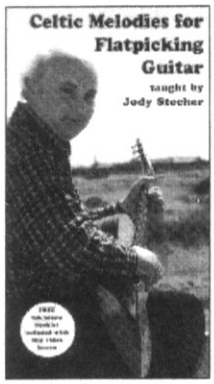
Web Site Updates

We have been working hard on our website over the past two months. We have added an "Artist of the Week" feature, a Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) page, a New Products page, and an on-line secure subscription form. We have also updated our links page and our news and reviews page. Check it out and let us know what you think! www.flatpick.com



Bluegrass Lead Guitar
taught by Scott Nygaard

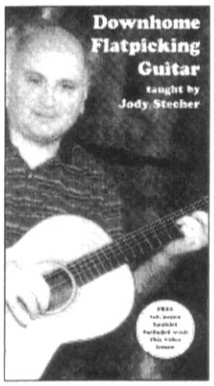
In this video, renowned guitarist Scott Nygaard guides you through the old-time fiddle tune *Little Billy Wilson*, a crosspicking arrangement of *Home Sweet Home*, a melodic solo on the blues song *Trouble in Mind* and shows you how to combine these influences when creating a solo on a bluegrass tune like *East Virginia Blues*. Scott explains in detail the techniques needed to master the bluegrass lead guitar style and the ideas behind his arrangements. All are clearly illustrated in split-screen close-ups. ***GW604 $29.95***



Celtic Melodies for Flatpicking Guitar
taught by Jody Stecher

The colorful tones of the guitar are well suited to the music of Ireland and Scotland. Jody Stecher has developed a unique approach to flatpicking Celtic music drawing on the sounds and techniques of the harp, fiddle and pipes. This video lesson presents a graded course starting with simpler fingering with special attention to picking techniques. Building on a base of a confident and deliberate right hand, more challenging left hand work is gradually introduced.

Titles include: ***Reel*** *Sheehan's Reel •* ***Jig*** *The Connaughtman's Rambles •* ***March*** *A Trip To Mabou Ridge •* ***Strathspey*** *The Devil In The Kitchen •* ***Reel*** *Muilleann Dubh •* ***Reel*** *Doctor Gilbert* ***GW605 $29.95***



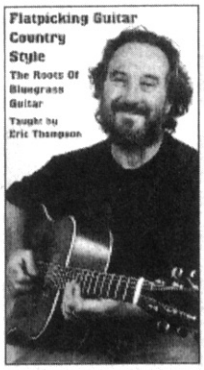
Downhome Flatpicking Guitar
taught by Jody Stecher

Jody Stecher has long been America's least generic flatpicker. This video is both a roadmap of Jody's development as a flatpicking guitarist of mostly American vernacular music, and a guide to how any flatpicker can expand their expressive technique. Think of it as *"Flatpicking According to Jody"*.

It's a graded course starting with basics in which the technical relationship between fingerpicking and flatpicking is made clear. The first few pieces are great songs with memorable melodies but minimal fingering so that right hand fundamentals can be mastered. With each new tune more techniques are introduced and more and more fingerboard is used, both horizontally and vertically. The second half of the video is purely instrumental music and the tunes are more complex.

Titles include: Carter's Blues, It's Hard To Love, I Got A Bulldog, Leake County Blues, Arkansas Traveler, The Dawn and The Ship in Full Sail ***GW606 $29.95***

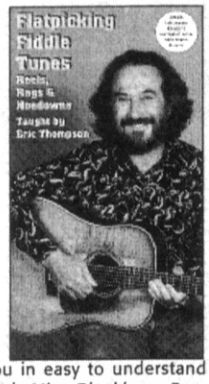
Flatpicking Guitar Country Style
The Roots of Bluegrass Guitar
Taught by Eric Thompson



Eric Thompson will have you flatpicking lead breaks in styles from Maybelle Carter to Doc Watson. You'll learn to pick out the melody to songs like *East Virginia Blues, Sad and Lonesome Day* and *Shady Grove*. You will learn to embellish your playing with "hammer-ons" and "pull-offs" for the real old-time country sound. You'll build a solid technique, advancing step-by-step through single note arrangements of *Thompson's Rag,* fiddle hoedowns *Arkansas Traveler* and *Soldier's Joy,* and a bluesy bluegrass break for *Good Old Mountain Dew* (employing slippery slides and hot runs). Eric's invaluable tips on left hand fingering and right hand pick technique are clearly illustrated in split-screen close-ups.

GW 601 $29.95

Flatpicking Fiddle Tunes
Reels, Rags & Hoedowns
Taught by Eric Thompson



Old-time fiddle tunes are the bedrock upon which acoustic guitar flatpicking is built. Eric Thompson's strong, melodic picking has set a benchmark for taste and tone for nearly four decades. In this video Eric shares soulful arrangements of seven of his favorites, guiding you slowly, line-by-line through classics like *Texas Gals, Fish In The Millpond,* Scottish-Irish rooted *Miller's Reel* and *Stony Point,* mountain modal *Falls of Richmond,* swingin' *Kennedy Rag* and the bouncy *East Tennessee Blues.* You'll build your repertoire and hone your technique, exploring fingering patterns in six different keys which are all clearly illustrated in split-screen close-ups. ***GW 602 $29.95***

Bluegrass Crosspicking Guitar
Taught by Eric Thompson

Crosspicking is an exciting flatpicking technique that is an essential part of every bluegrass guitarist's arsenal. Utilizing repeated patterns on three-string groups, crosspicking captures the bounce of a fiddler's double shuffle and the drive of three-finger banjo Scruggs-style rolls. Eric Thompson lays it out for you in easy to understand steps, illustrating the basic patterns with arrangements of *Fly Around My Pretty Little Miss, Blackberry Rag, Beaumont Rag, Wildwood Flower,* and *Cross-eyed Fiddler.* Split-screen close-ups let you see exactly what and how Eric is playing. ***GW 603 $29.95***

Beginner's Country Guitar
taught by Fred Sokolow

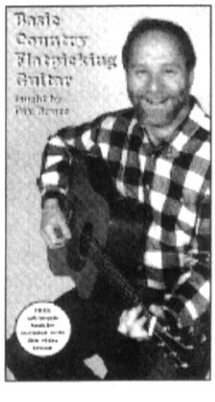
All you need to put over a good country song is your voice and a guitar. This video lesson gives you the tools you need to play old-fashioned country, honky-tonk and country rock. You'll learn how to play: Accompaniment strums for different rhythmic feels; a variety of first-position chords; bass runs; major scales; solos and turnarounds.

Tunes include: Blue Eyes Crying In The Rain, I'm So Lonesome I Could Cry, The Bottle Let Me Down, I'm Movin' On, Will The Circle Be Unbroken, Silver Wings and Jambalaya, ***GW407 $29.95***

Flatpicking Country Classics
taught by Fred Sokolow

In this 75 minute video Fred teaches nine standards every country picker/singer should know... from start to finish. You'll learn an intro for each song, a backup pattern and bass runs to play while singing, an instrumental solo, and an ending. Picking up where his *BEGINNER'S COUNTRY GUITAR* video left off, Fred keeps the arrangements fairly simple but includes a few up-the-neck chord positions and hot licks. You'll learn solos and runs in five different keys. Each song is played at regular speed and then slowed down on a split-screen that gives you a close-up look at the picking hand and the chording hand.

Tunes include: New San Antonio Rose, Wild Side of Life, Waltz Across Texas, The Race is On, Beautiful Kentucky Waltz, That's the Way Love Goes, I Don't Hurt Anymore, Someone I Used To Know and City of New Orleans ***GW410 $29.95***



Basic Country Flatpicking Guitar
taught by Dix Bruce

Hot guitar licks abound these days but simple melodies played along with chord strums on the low strings of the guitar have never lost their appeal. Pioneered in the 1920s by the great Mother Maybelle Carter, this combination of lead and rhythm guitar playing is the foundation upon which all traditional country, folk, bluegrass, and hot flatpicking guitar is based. In this video lesson Dix Bruce carefully teaches lead and backup guitar to nine great and classic country, bluegrass, and folk standards, ballads and hot breakdowns played by musicians the world over.

Tunes include: Worried Man Blues, Lonesome Valley, Storms Are On the Ocean, Handsome Molly, Wildwood Flower, Redwing, John Hardy, Jimmie Brown the Newsboy ***GW308 $29.95***

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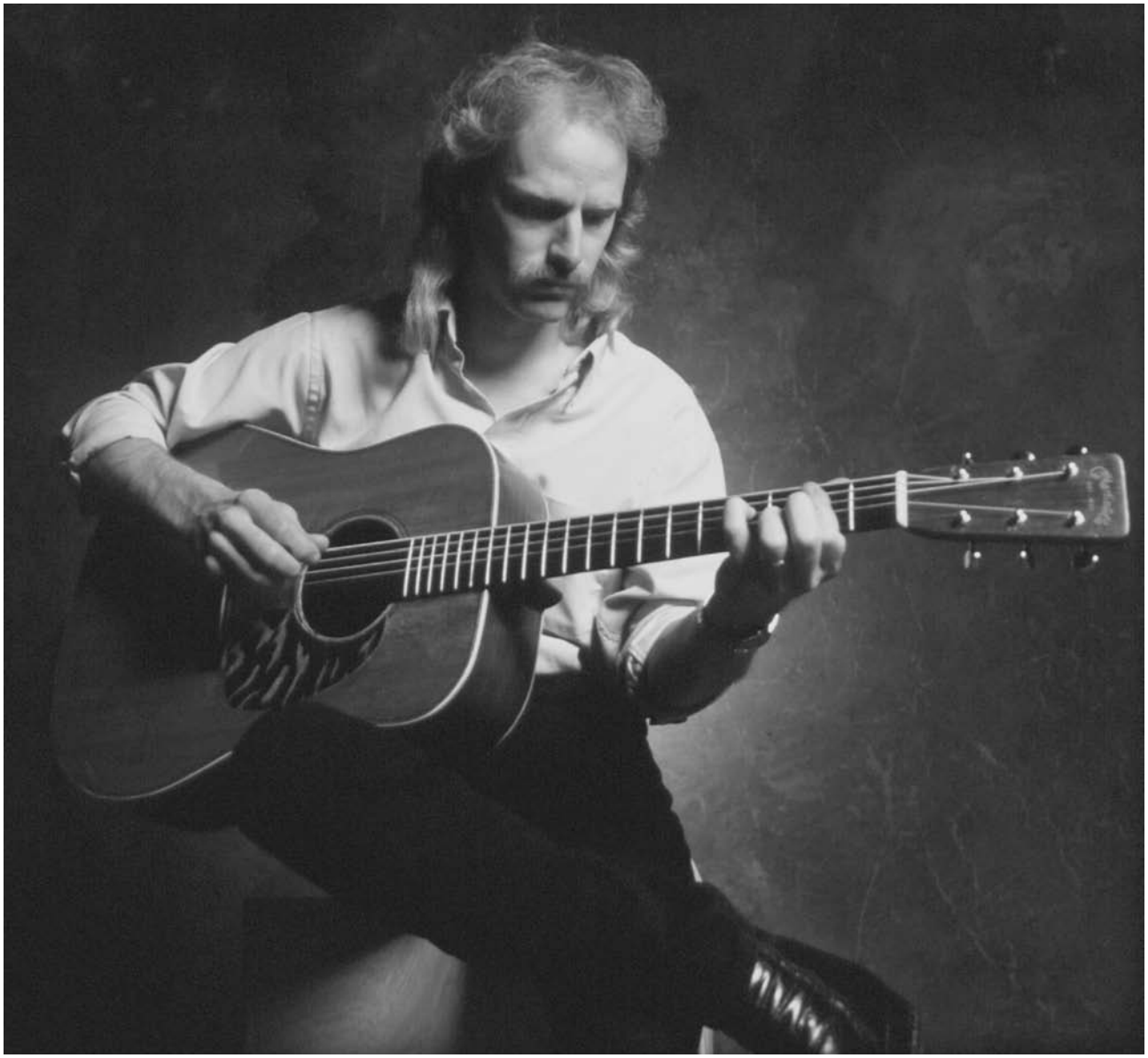
Richard Bennett



by Dan Miller

Richard Bennett's bluegrass education has stepped along a perfectly designed progressive path. It could not have been more well planned had the country's best educators been put to the task of designing an educational curriculum for a bluegrass guitar player. He started out playing with his father when he was eight years old. By the time he was 12, he was playing in his father's bluegrass band. At 17 he was playing weekly with Flatt & Scruggs' legendary fiddler Benny Sims. By the time he was 22 he was recording with Vassar Clements and playing full-time gigs at Dollywood and in Gatlinburg, spending hours upon hours on stage behind his guitar and vocal microphone. In 1990 he joined J.D. Crowe and the New South, receiving lessons in hard-driving bluegrass and perfecting his bluegrass timing, as Keith Whitley and Tony Rice had done in that band before him. In 1997 Richard stepped out of the sideman postition and moved to the front of the band with his group Blue Towne. He recorded two critically acclaimed audio projects, *Walking Down the Line* and *A Long Lonesome Time*, as well as a performance video, *Richard Bennett & Blue Towne*, released in 1999 by Rebel Records. Most recently Richard has joined two of the most well respected bluegrass musicians in the business, Mike Auldridge and Jimmy Gaudreau, to form a powerful and exciting trio. The band released their first recording, *This Old Town*, last year and their next project is due out early next year.

Richard has also spent time teaching students the art of flatpicking the acoustic guitar. Anyone who has worked with his instructional video, which primarily focuses on rhythm playing in the bluegrass context, knows that Richard is a talented teacher and knows his subject thoroughly. His years of working with bluegrass masters like Benny Sims, J.D. Crowe, and Vassar Clements are

evident in watching him demonstrate and explain his craft.

Traditional systems of education call for ten years of work as an apprentice, followed by ten years as a journeyman, and finally ten more years of work to truly master a craft. Having recently hit his 30th year in bluegrass music, Richard has followed that road. But in music, like most art forms, the work is never really done. Richard continues to evolve as a musician and his guitar style continues to define itself with each new band and each new project.

The Early Years

Richard Bennett was born into a musical family and grew up in the Roan Mountain area of east Tennessee. His father played guitar in the style of Chet Atkins and Merle Travis and his mother played both guitar and piano. His mother was a classically trained pianist who studied at the Michigan State Music Conservatory. Richard says, "Most of my relatives also played music and music was played constantly around the house."

Richard began playing the guitar when he was eight years old. For the first five or six years he only played rhythm guitar to accompany his father's lead playing. When Richard was twelve or thirteen years old his father became interested in playing bluegrass and formed a band called Bluegrass Review. It was about this time that Richard also became interested in playing lead guitar after hearing his first Doc Watson recording in about 1974. It wasn't long before Richard began playing lead guitar in his father's band. Within a year of forming the band, Richard's father picked up the dobro and gave the guitar spot to his son.

Richard's first two influences for learning lead breaks on the guitar were Doc Watson and Clarence White. He says that he learned to play by listening to recordings over and over again to figure out what Doc and Clarnence were doing. The first record he wore out was Doc and Merle Watson's *On Stage*. Next he studied Clarence White's playing on *Appalachian Swing* and *Live In Sweden*.

After Richard had already been playing lead guitar in bands around his home for three or four years, he discovered Tony Rice. He said that his father brought home a copy of the *J.D. Crowe and the New South* album (Rounder 0044) that featured Ricky Skaggs and Tony Rice. He says that it was Tony Rice's phrasing and fluidity, both as an instrumentalist and vocalist, that drew him to Tony's style.

At age seventeen Richard got a gig in Little Switzerland, North Carolina, playing in a band with legendary fiddler Benny Sims every Saturday night. He says, "I learned a lot from both Benny Sims and the banjo player E. C. Miller." Every Saturday night the band played three one hour sets for a dance. Richard played that gig for two years and says that both his rhythm and lead playing improved greatly from the experience. Additionally, during this period of time, Richard worked in the band Stoney Creek Grass with the Webb brothers—Jeff, Jerome, and Jimmy.

After graduating from high school in 1979, Richard took a job as a guide at a friend's ranch in California. He says that, because he had no one to pick with on the ranch, he did some serious "woodshedding" there. Knowing that all his spare time would be spent in a remote cabin, Richard brought a pile of chord books, scale books, and music theory books with him to California. He says, "Everything I thought I would need to know about music theory, I taught myself during that year in Califorina. It was 'woodshed city.' "

Dollywood, Gatlinburg, and the New South

After returning to Tennessee in 1980, Richard spent the next ten years working in Gatlinburg and at Dollywood. He says that some winters he worked in clubs and bars in Gatlinburg with the band Mossy Creek playing five sets a day, seven days a week. At times they would also play three sets, six days a week, at the Gatlinburg Palace. He says, "There were times when I only had one night a week off from playing music." For five summers Richard worked at Dollywood during the day and then would go play gigs in Gatlinburg in the evenings. For several years during the 1980s Richard spent his winters in Michagan playing with the bluegrass band Wendy Smith and Blue Velvet.

Richard says that during the 1980s he really began to become interested in "new acoustic music." He said, "The only music I listened to was by people like David Grisman, Joe Pass, Django Reinhardt, Stephen Grapelli, and Oscar Peterson. When the band played bar gigs in Gatlinburg, we played a lot of the new acoustic music. The owner's didn't want straight bluegrass, but they wanted an acoustic show."

After spending ten years playing primarily in Gatlinburg, Dollywood, and up in Michigan, Richard got a call from J. D. Crowe in 1990. Richard had picked at a few festivals with J. D. and he had also become friends with Bobby Sloan. When J.D. needed a guitar player, Sloan recommended Richard. Richard says, "I went up and spent a weekend with Crowe

Richard performing with J.D. Crowe and the New South (Left to Right): Don Rigsby, J.D. Crowe, and Richard

Richard Bennett with Blue Towne: Dean Osborne, Randall Barnes, Richard Bennett and Wanda Barnett

and was offered the job."

Richard stayed in J. D. Crowe's band consistently for nearly six years. He credits Crowe for helping to improve his timing and dynamics. He said that he learned the most from Crowe when the two of them would sit together in a hotel room and jam. Richard recorded the highly acclaimed, Grammy-winning *Flashback* album while he was with Crowe. Richard left Crowe in early 1996 because J.D. and the band were not playing much and Richard got an offer from Terry Baucom. During the 1996 festival season Richard toured with Terry Baucom and Lou Reid as a member of their band Carolina.

Stepping Out Front

In 1997, after the release of his first solo recording, *Walking Down The Line*, Richard decided to step out on his own and form the band Blue Towne. Blue Towne consists of Richard on guitar and lead vocals, Wanda Barnett (Richard's wife) on fiddle, Dean Osborne on banjo, and Randall Barnes on bass. Although the band is still active today, Richard says that Blue Towne is "more of a regional act" because its members are all involved in other projects. In 1999 Rebel Records released a live performance video of Blue Towne at Kentucky's historic Sipp Theater.

Today Richard Bennett is actively touring with Jimmy Gaudreau, Mike Auldridge, and Kip Martin as the trio Auldridge, Bennett, Gaudreau following the release of their project *This Old Town* in 1999. Richard said that the idea for the project and the group was born after a promoter from Switzerland called and wanted Richard to put a band together for a European tour. At first Richard and Jimmy Gaudreau were going to tour as a duo. However, the promoter wanted a band. Jimmy called Mike Aldridge and the band came together. In order to have product to sell on the road during the tour, the trio went into the studio with bassist Joe Sharp and recorded *This Old Town*. In Europe the trio performed in eleven countries in fourteen days.

The success of the Auldridge, Bennett, Gaudreau recording and European tour has kept the group together and active. They have just recently finished recording their second project, *Blue Lonesome Wind*, and Vassar Clements has joined them for some of their road dates.

In addition to being constantly active as a performer and recording artist over the past thirty years, Richard has also spent time teaching students how to play bluegrass guitar. In the following interview, we talked with Richard about his experiences teaching guitar students and about his bluegrass guitar style:

You have spent some time teaching students how to play bluegrass guitar. When students come to you for lessons, in general what skills do you find they are lacking?

Most of the students that come here want to learn how to flatpick tunes right off the bat, but I seem to stop every one of them and take them back to focusing on rhythm first. The students that I have done that with, and the ones who have stayed with that and put their focus on good timing, good tone, good attack, and dynamics—the ones who have chosen to do that—have really excelled. Starting from the front with rhythm made their flatpicking leads easier when they got to it.

Many of the students that came in didn't even know the chord changes to the songs they wanted to play. I said, "Wait a minute. We have to stop here and get this right." My theory is that if you can't play rhythm to the song you are playing, when you finish up your solo, what good is it? When the next guy takes his break what are you going to do?

What else do you emphasize when you are teaching?

I really preach dynamics heavily. That comes from years of playing with a lot of different bands and listening to a lot of live tapes that I have made. Studying the dynamics of the rhythm guitar versus the vocals, versus the choruses, versus another solo instrument is important.

I know you released an instructional video for bluegrass guitar a number of years ago (The *Complete Bluegrass Guitar Method*, available from Flatpicking Mercantile: 800-413-8296). How did the idea for that come about?

A lot of my students came to me and said, "I wish you had a video of what you do, especially the rhythm stuff." As you know, there are a lot of videos about flatpicking but not many about just playing bluegrass style rhythm.

What can you tell us about the video?

The video really focuses on rhythm—dynamics, tone, attack, strum patterns, standard rhythm patterns and embellishments, chord voicings, alternate chords, some crosspicking within standard rhythm patterns, and those kind of rhythm ideas. I do break down a couple of lead songs and present that, but mostly it is for people who want to strengthen their rhythm.

I had guitar students telling me that they could get the lead notes down, but they could not get the rhythm down pat. The video is designed for people who are having problems developing rhythm skills. I tried to explain what might make the rhythm feel more natural. A lot of my students, when they come to me, are much better lead players than they are rhythm players.

I took notes from what my students were wanting to learn and made a compila-

tion. That is why I call it the "complete" video because it takes you from beginning bluegrass rhythm to some advance rhythm techniques.

I noticed in watching the video that you play mostly downstrokes when you are playing rhythm.

Yea, I would say that 90% of my rhythm playing is down strokes. I do a lot of "pushes," or what I call a "fan" where I push across the strings. I do that to set up my tone right off the bat and give me one nice down beat, and then I will intermesh the crosspicking or the limited number of upstrokes that I use.

I find that I get a lot better tone playing downstrokes and it is so much more natural to me. That is the way that I have always played.

Do you also find that in addition to the richer tone, the use of a lot of downstrokes gives you more drive?

I think so. I find it much easier to play a steady tempo playing with downstrokes as opposed to up strokes or going down-up-down-up.

I noticed that you like to insert crosspicking into your rhythm playing. What picking pattern do you use there?

It is usually two downstrokes followed by an upstroke. But it will also depend on the piece of music. It may vary from that, but the majority will be two downs and an up.

When you play a G-run are you using all down strokes?

Yes, all downs. Most of my rhythm, bass runs and strums, are all downs.

When you get a new student and begin to teach them bluegrass rhythm, what do you find they have trouble with or that they are missing?

The very first thing is tone. The first thing I always notice, even about an intermediate student, is tone.

How do you correct that?

I try to teach them to minimize the movement of their right hand. I try to give them a block to work in to keep their hand around the sweet spot of the guitar and tell them not to come out of that no matter what. One thing that helps students is to really concentrate on getting the same sound out of each string. I help them get the same tone balance across all of the strings so they don't have an overload of either highs or lows.

I also try to get the students the minimize the use of the pick. I hit the top of the string with the minimum amount of pick. I think some students try to use too much pick down in the strings. I will have some students who come in shoving half of the pick down into the strings. There is no way you can play like that.

Do you use a pretty heavy pick?

Yea, but I have thinned out over the years. Years ago I used a heavy pick. I have always used tortoise shell, but now I use about a mid-thickness instead of a real heavy pick.

Do you find that once you make your students aware of tone, and they start thinking about their tone, that they begin to improve right away?

Yea, because for most of them it was never an issue. They have never addressed it. They would ask me, "How do you get that sound you get?" I said, "Well, that sound is called tone and what we have to do is work on that."

Once a student can perform a solo at what I call "stage level," I will record them and have them listen to what they are doing. I have them play both the lead break and the rhythm so that they can hear, when they finish playing their solo, what they sound like when they go back into playing rhythm. Then we reverse the scenerio and listen back both ways to see which end may be lacking, or which end might need more strengthening.

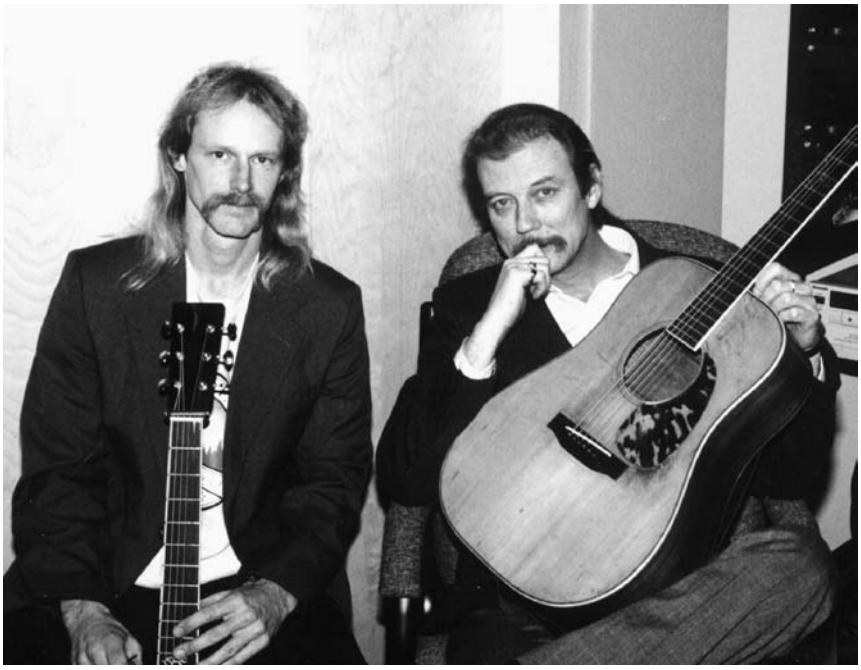
In terms of playing lead breaks to songs, what do you find your students are missing?

Melody. I think there is a trend today for people to play a lot of licks. Sometimes there is no trace of melody in what they are playing. It doesn't have to be all melody, in my opinion—because Lord knows I am an improvisational guy—but I think if more people kept the frame of the melody in mind while taking their solo it makes it much easier.

When I am playing, even if I don't play the full meldoy, I will have that structure in mind and work around it and drop it in when it fits nicely. I try to mesh the improvisation in with the melody. When I first teach a student a song, I will have them just play the melody until they get, what I call "melody burnout." When they get sick of playing the song, I will change one measure here or there and give them something different that still respects the melody. It helps create a little flare or character in their playing without losing sight of the melody of the song.

Moving off the subject of teaching, I'd like to talk about your style of guitar playing for a moment. People have compared your style with that of Tony Rice. Could you compare and contrast

Richard Bennett with Mike Aldridge and Jimmy Gaudreau



Richard Bennett and Tony Rice

your style with Tony's for us?

Tony and I have talked about this. One thing I will say to start this conversation is that I played sort of the way I play before I ever heard Tony. But I was also highly influenced by him and I have used some of his chord voicings because I think he is a real genius when it comes to that.

I would say that the biggest difference between what I do and what Tony does is the attack. If you listen to the records you will notice that. When I sit down and play with Tony, that is what I feel and he says the same thing.

In what way is the attack different?

I hit the strings harder. In fact, that is the one complement that I have gotten from Tony. I remember one night in the motel room he said that he liked my attack.

You said previously that the thing you loved about Tony's playing was his phrasing. How has that influenced your playing?

I think Tony's phrases are very detailed and at the same time the creativity just flows with every note that he plays. These days I restrain myself a little bit. I try to play a phrase that will lead into another phrase that has different tonal qualities because that keeps me interested in what I am doing.

In other words, I like to drop out of one tone category into another, whether it be from a low pass to a high pass, or mixing in the mid-range notes when I am playing so that I can hear all of the guitar.

Another difference between Tony and I is that I tend to play a lot of suspended stuff and I play in "threes" a lot. I will play off the third interval. In a G, C, and D progression I might play a G pass with an Am, Bm, and then drop right into my IV chord. I will mix in the II and the III before I get to the IV. I tend to hear that a lot. When I am thinking the "one" chord, I will play the VI interval over the one a lot—the VI minor. I also hear that when I listen to myself back on tape.

So these are things you have not necessarily planned out, or are aiming for, but when you listen to yourself, you find that you are doing them?

Yea, if I was to analyze what I was doing I would say, "Well, I was playing that whole phrase in the VI minor rather than the one."

When I saw you last April at Merlefest you told me you told me you have plans to shoot another instructional video. What do you plan to present there?

I will probably go into a more extensive rhythm studies. I think there is a need for that so I want to stay with it. If that is the one thing I can offer people, than that is what it will be. I want to teach how to intertwine cross-picking with straight up style rhythm and those kind of ideas.

So whereas your first video was more fundamental and conceptual, this new video will be more technique oriented?

Yea, I think so.

Richard Bennett's Guitar

Most pickers who have seen Richard play over the years will expect to see him come on stage with his beat up old, large soundhole, 1946 Martin D-28. Richard sold that guitar just over a year ago, however, after he fell in love with one of the the new Martin LSV guitars. He said he found the LSV to be warmer and more balanced. This is the guitar he used predominantly on the Auldridge, Bennett, Gaudreau recording *This Old Town*. However, as these things happen sometimes, that love affair only lasted about a year. In August of this year Richard became the owner of a new Frank Powell guitar.

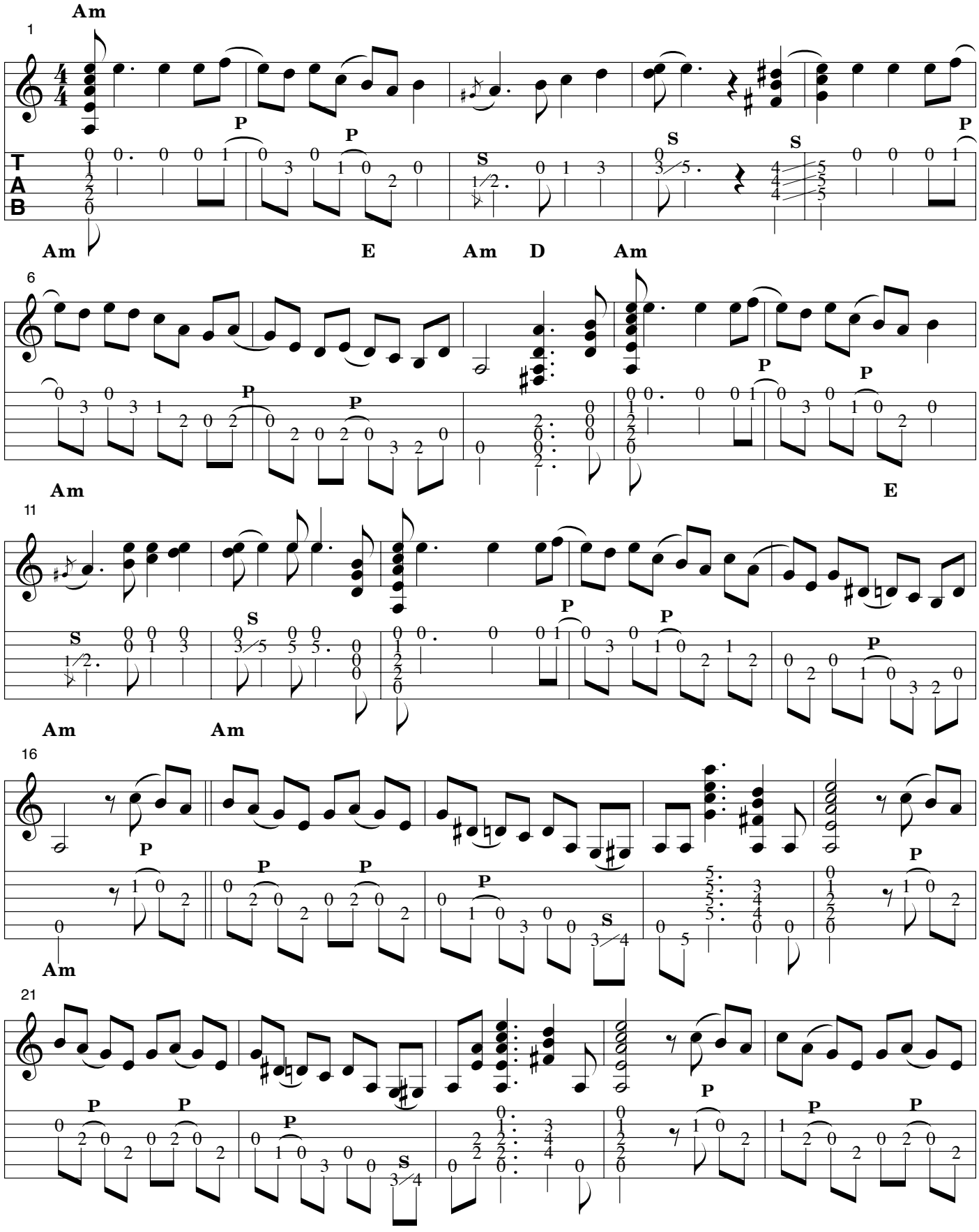
Richard's new guitar has a red spruce top with Honduran rosewood back and sides. It is patterned after the 30s era Martin specs and also includes the low profile neck and large soundhole. After buying the guitar, Richard took it to his "favorite luthier" John Arnold and had John put in a black locust bridge plate.

When asked about his preference for large soundhole guitars, Richard said that he finds that the big soundhole creates more treble and balances out the high end. He also said that he gets more projection on stage and it is easier to work the mic with the large soundhole guitars.

On the following pages, we present an arrangement of Richard's tune "Sally On The Treadmill." Richard recorded this tune on the Auldridge, Bennett, Gaudreau CD *This Old Town*. However, the arrangement here is a bit different than on the CD. We visited with Richard at his home in Richmond, Kentucky, and recorded him playing this tune for the companion audio CD that goes with this issue. This arrangement of "Sally On The Treadmill" was taken from the slow version of the tune Richard played on the *Flatpicking Guitar Magazine* audio CD.

For those readers who may be interested in Richard Bennett's excellent instructional video, we now have it available at Flatpicking Mercantile. Call (800) 413-8296 to order.

Sally On The Treadmill

Written by Richard Bennett
Transcribed by Brad Davis

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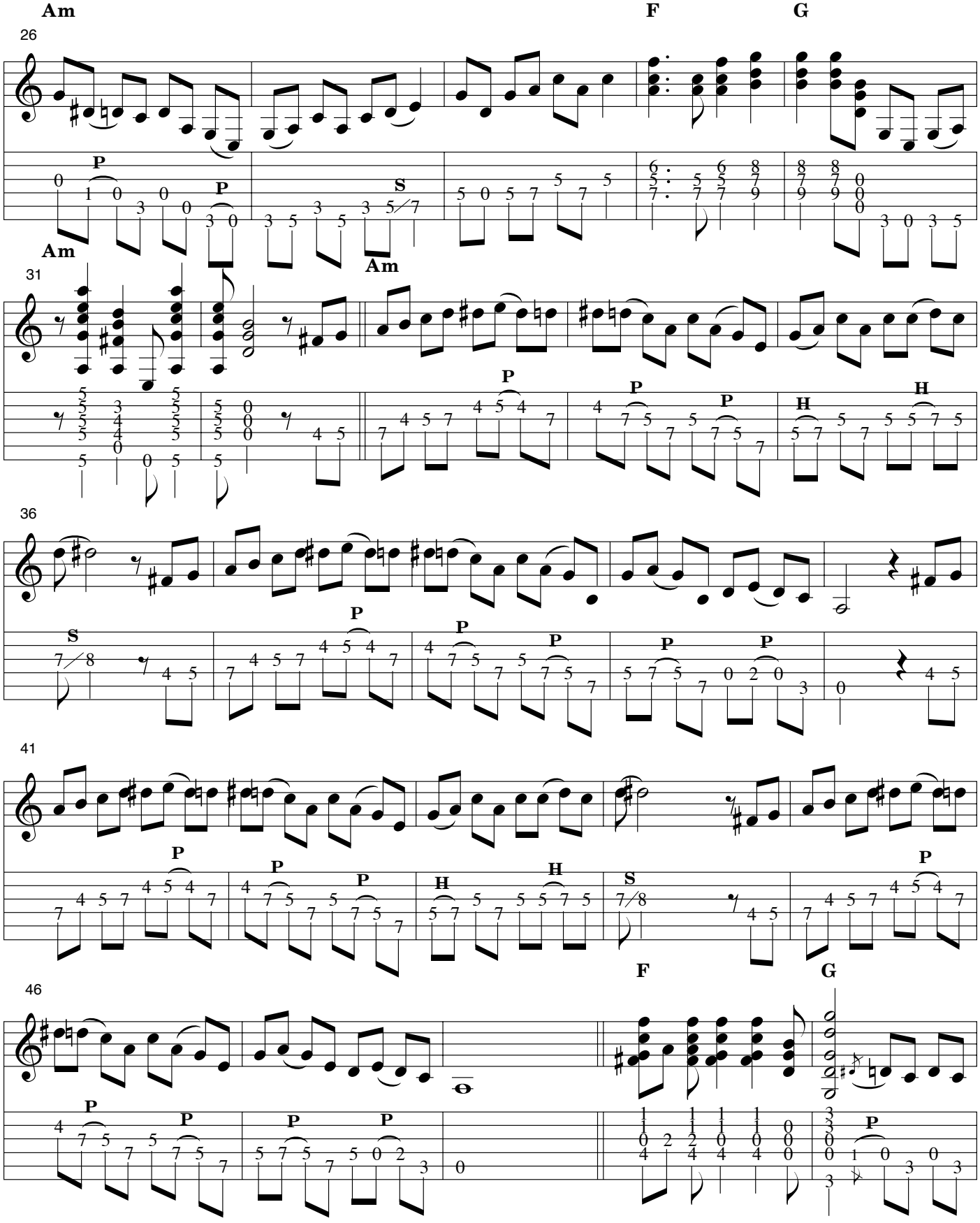
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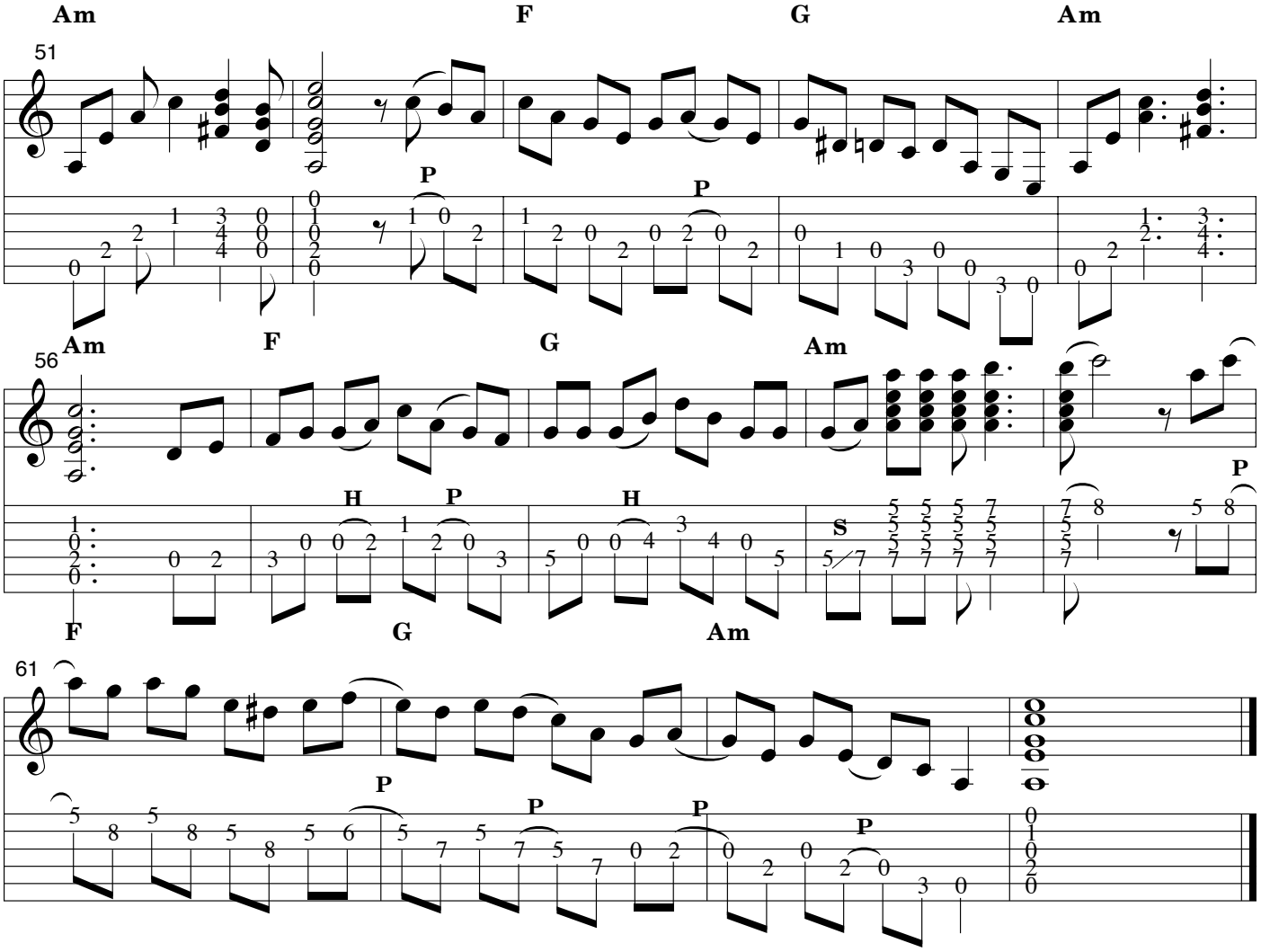
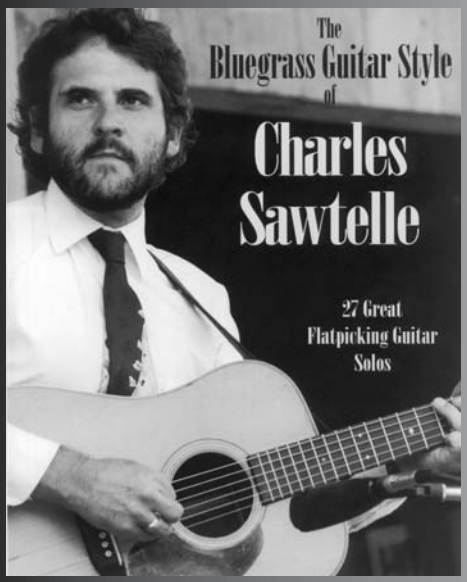

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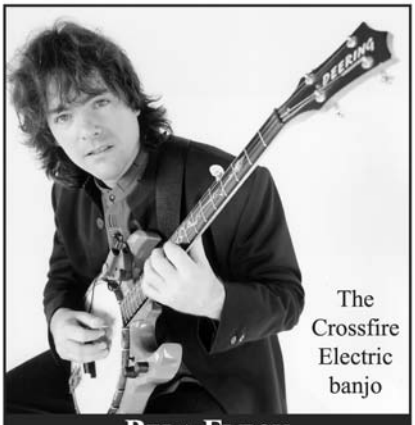

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St. Anne's Reel

by Craig Vance

If you have been subscribing to *Flatpicking Guitar Magazine* for the last year or so, you know that this tune has been included in a couple of past issues. I have had this one sitting on the back burner for quite some time, and once I realized that my arrangement was different enough, I decided that I should go ahead and present it.

I recall this tune from back in the late 70s when I first heard it. Back then it seemed to be very popular in jam sessions. This particular version is modified from that time frame since I became aware that using one's artistic freedom in the bluegrass world was indeed controversial. Ah, but that's just the way I am!

I prefer the key of D (C position with the capo on the 2nd fret). This works very well for fiddle players. The accompanying rhythm guitar sounds great un-capoed playing straight out of D. You won't have any difficulty finding recordings of this tune, as several musicians have recorded it in many variations.

With all the available versions of this tune floating around out there, it should not be too difficult to come up with your own version, using bits and pieces from those vast resources. Have a "reel" good time with this one.

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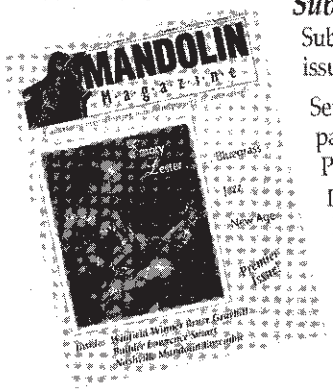

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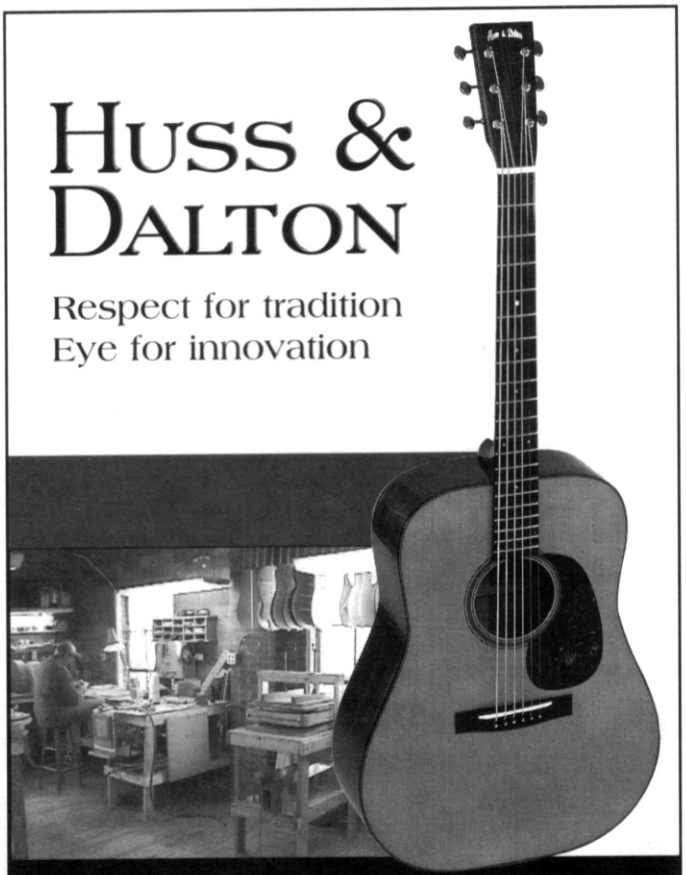

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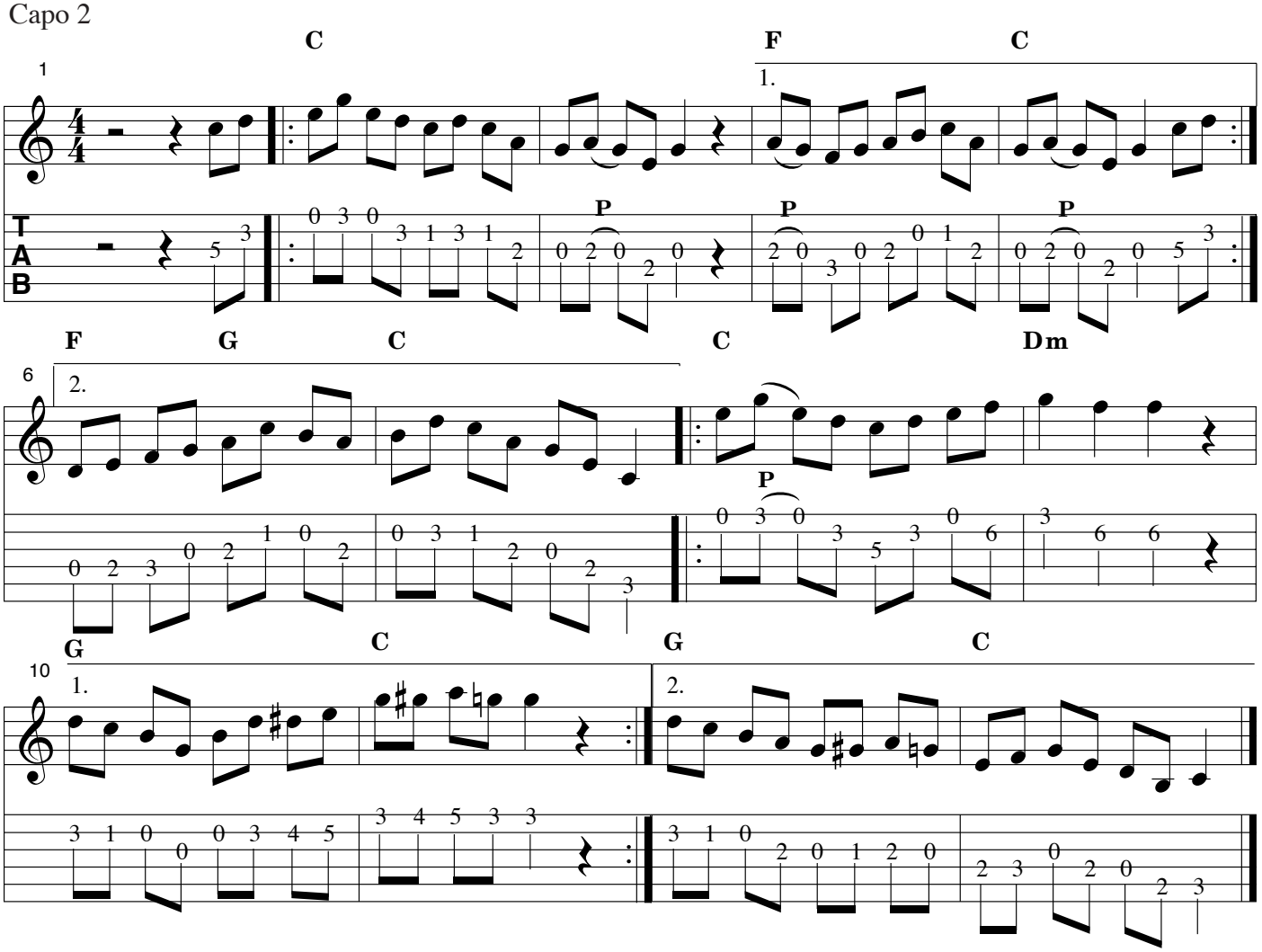
St. Anne's Reel

Arranged by Craig Vance

Capo 2



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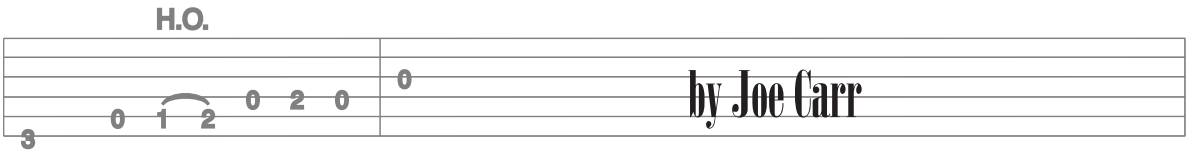


by Joe Carr

Peter Rowan: Northern Bluegrass Boy

Modern fans of acoustic and bluegrass music know Peter Rowan as a unique folk performer with a varied original songbag. His many recordings and performances with a who's-who of modern acoustic musicians has made him a familiar artist on the "Americana" musical landscape.

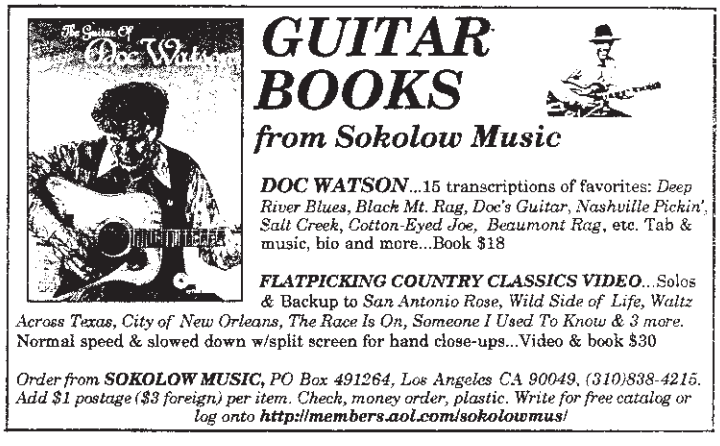
While Deadheads remember Rowan as a consort of Jerry Garcia in the bluegrass group Old and In the Way, others may remember his work as a member of the 1970s rock group Seatrain which also featured fellow Bluegrass Boy Richard Greene. Rowan and Greene later appeared with David Grisman, Bill Keith, and Clarence White in the bluegrass super group Muleskinner.

Less know to his younger audience is the fact that Rowan was a member of Bill Monroe's Bluegrass Boys in the mid-1960s. Rowan was among the first Northern musicians to work with Monroe. Bill Monroe had a penchant for writing eerie story songs of death and lost love. These themes are echoed in the early culture of religion and southern Appalachia, where death and sorrow were a part of everyday life. "Walls of Time," written by Monroe and Rowan, is a classic of this genre and was recorded twice by Monroe. The song is of particular interest to guitarists because of its unique bass run pattern.

The first commercial recording of the song was in 1968, after Rowan had left the group. Roland White sings lead and plays guitar while Monroe provides his trademark tenor voice. It was recorded again in the 1970s with Bill's son James playing guitar and singing lead. The guitar rhythm on both commercial recordings borrow from Rowan's original guitar part.

The transcription below comes from one of my favorite Monroe recordings, *Bill Monroe and the Bluegrass Boys: Live Recordings, 1956-1969, Off the Record, Volume 1* on the Smithsonian Folkways label. This recording presents the group in live performance settings without the "polish" of Monroe's commercial recordings. The result is an insight into the actual sound of Monroe's live shows featuring some of his most exciting sidemen. "Walls of Time" comes from a recording made at the first Finecastle, Virginia, Festival in 1965. The recording features Monroe and Rowan singing with only guitar and mandolin accompaniment.

This tune is performed in C. The guitar is caped at the third fret and played in A position. Bluegrass guitarists often capo at the fifth fret in order to use the familiar G position. This is probably because the open C position contains the F chord which can be difficult to play cleanly, and frankly, some guitarists don't know many interesting runs and licks in open C (we will address this problem in a future article). The third fret capo is a great compromise. You will just have to learn some open A licks. This transcription has several great runs. Add these to your arsenal.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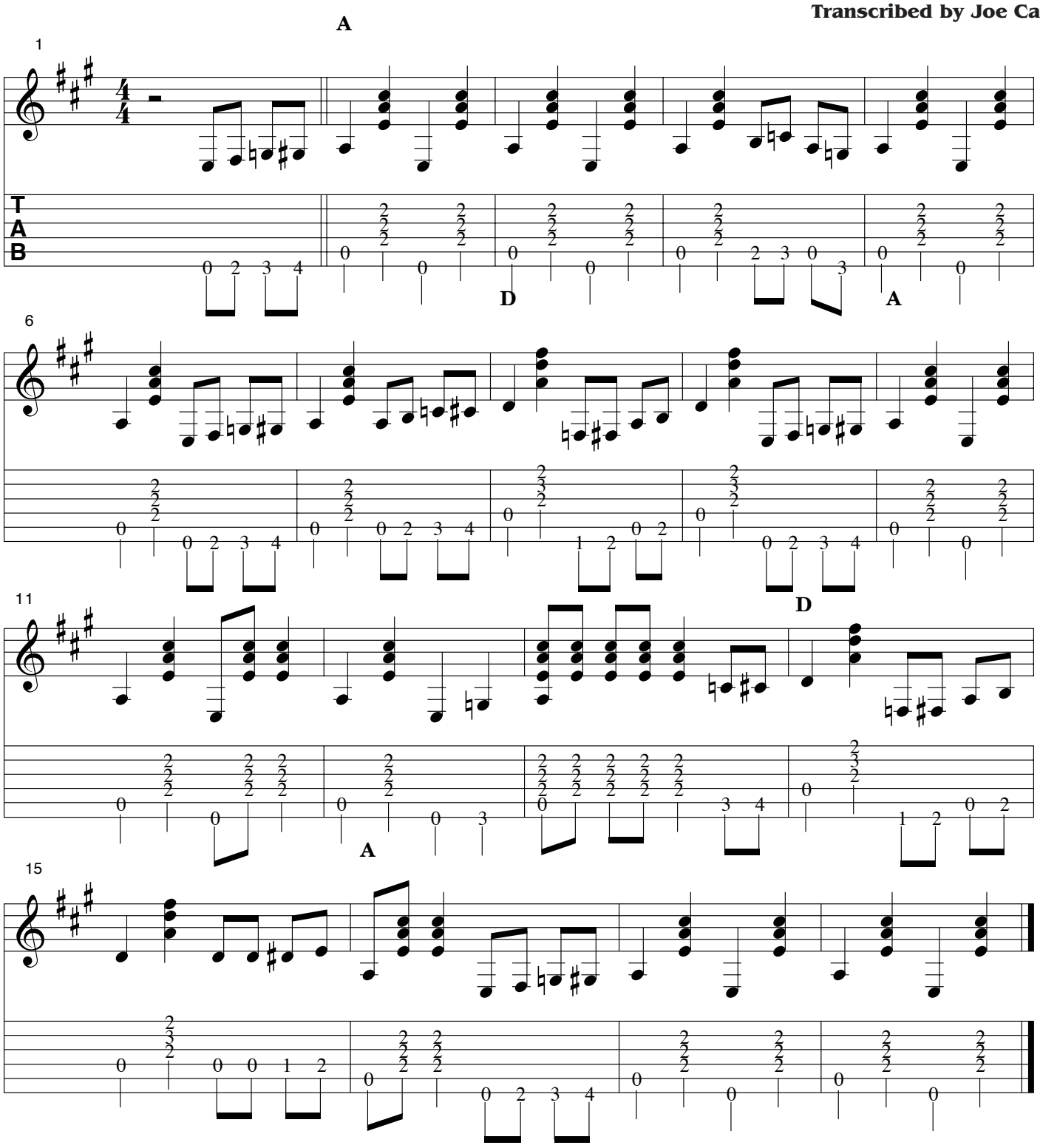
Walls of Time - Rhythm

Arranged by Peter Rowan
Transcribed by Joe Carr

Flatpick Profile:
Hull and Larson

by Adam Granger

Dave Hull and Kari Larson joined forces in 1995 after long and illustrious careers with other musicians. They draw from an impressive and eclectic collection of stringed instruments (see the "arsenal" below) to present instrumental pieces that are fresh and innovative without abandoning the material's traditional roots. Their three CDs have received critical acclaim. Their most recent offering, *The Goose Is Getting Fat*, is a Christmas collection without equal.

Dave Hull is fifty and hails from Fargo, North Dakota, hence "Dakota Dave," the moniker his friends hung on him three decades ago when he moved to Minneapolis to work as a musician. He teamed up in the 70s and 80s with crooner Sean Blackburn for a series of recordings which still acquit themselves admirably. His flatpicking prowess is evident throughout his recordings, but especially on his sterling *Hull's Victory*, where he is joined on several cuts by Doc Watson.

Kari Larson, 39, was born in Berkeley, California, and grew up on the Monterey Peninsula, where she played in a number of bluegrass bands. When she's not on the road with Hull, she plays in a wide range of musical ensembles, from swing to bluegrass, and is in high demand as a sideperson. She is an outstanding stringed instrument repairperson and a kind and gentle guitar and mandolin teacher.

The Hull-Larson Arsenal

Kari and Dave have performed with a wide variety of modern and vintage stringed instruments. Their vintage archtop guitars include a 1933 Epiphone De Luxe Masterbilt, a 1936 Gibson L-10, a 1938 Ward's archtop made by Gibson, a 1948 Gibson L-7 an 1952 Epiphone Devon.

For flattop guitars, they use a 1935 Gibson Jumbo, a 1930 Kel Kroydon KK-1 (made by Gibson), a 1946 mahogany-topped Gibson J-45, a 1930 Martin 5-17T tenor guitar and a 1998 Charles A. Hoffman piccolo guitar. Kari plays a 1988 Flatiron F-5 mandolin and a 1917 Gibson K-1 mandolin from the 20s. A Weissenborn Model 1 lap guitar is Dave's current nemesis.

For resophonics, they have a 1929 wood-bodied National Triolian and a 1931 Style One tricone. They've recently been endorsed by National, and they're now playing new guitars made by them: a 2000 Style N for Kari and a 2000 Style One for Dave. They will tell anyone who cares to listen that the new Nationals are better than the old ones.

We met for this interview in Dave's comfortable south Minneapolis living room on a sunny August morning. Kari had driven up from her home in Maiden Rock, Wisconsin, and I had crossed the Mississippi from my St. Paul home.

The Interview

With so many instruments to choose from, how do you decide which ones you'll use on a given tune?

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KL: A lot of times we already have an idea of what would suit that tune. If not, we just try different ones on and see which work.

DH: If Kari is playing a tune on the mandolin, I can back it up on the archtop guitar, the flattop guitar, the National or the piccolo guitar (which is tuned up a fourth from a standard guitar).

KL: We end up changing our minds sometimes, usually toward the beginning of learning a tune.

Does instrumentation ever change after you've done a tune for a while?
KL: That doesn't happen as often, but once in a while.

DH: We've got one number that we recorded on flattops on our first album, and we've recently changed that to Nationals.

You don't take all of those instruments on the road with you, do you?
KL: Actually, yes. [Laughter all around.]

DH: We travel with eight instruments: two archtops, two Nationals, the piccolo guitar, a tenor guitar, a mandolin and a flattop. We also travel with a sound rack, recording gear and two Groove Tube mikes so we can a get high-quality sound in the house and good recordings of our performances. Sometimes we also bring a couple of ukeleles.

What kind of vehicle do you travel in?
DH: For road work, we'll usually rent the biggest thing we can get our hands on.

KL: And for local gigs, we'll use my Isuzu Trooper.

Nationals are generally thought of as great blues and slide guitars, but you use them for everything but. . .
KL: We both love the sound of Nationals; they have such a distinctive voice.

DH: And the tunes sort of pick the guitars. Flatpicking the National creates a very interesting sound that one doesn't hear often. I'd like to hear it more because it is a really cool sound.

You guys use the tenor guitar a lot. . .
KL: Yea, I came across this beautiful instrument [her 1930 Martin 5-17 T] and put it to work. It makes sense to me: it is like a big mandolin, tuned like the Delmore Brothers did: C, G, D, A. I think in numbers more than in notes, so, for me, it's an easy transition from mandolin, with just a longer scale length.

DH: It's also got those lovely wide chords that you can't get on a regular guitar. . .

How about your repertoire? Who arranges and decides who takes which leads?
DH: That stuff just sort of falls into place. We're not so much "lead and rhythm" as we are "duet." With Hull and Larson, the line is not clear between the lead part and the rhythm part.

KL: Yeah, it changes off a lot in the course of a tune.

Dave, whose playing influenced you?
DH: It starts with Doc, but another huge influence upon me was Ted Bogan—

—of the Chicago trio Bogan, Martin and Armstrong—
DH: Yeah. I first saw him in 1970 at the Philadelphia Folk Festival. He was amazing: he'd play these chords up and down the neck and look up and grin. . . The basis of my approach to rhythm guitar and swing and closed chords and so forth started by seeing Ted Bogan play and by talking to him. I was also influenced by Django Reinhardt, Dick MacDonnough and Carl Kress. . . Dave Van Ronk also influenced me a lot; he turned me on to classic ragtime.

How about you, Kari?
KL: I came of age in bluegrass bands in the [San Francisco] Bay area. My early inspirations were Don Reno (on guitar), Doc Watson, Bill Monroe, and Sam Bush. I've been going further and further back the last few years. Eddie Lang is who I currently like listening to. He had a swingy approach that I can understand. It's not really 40s and 50s jazz yet; it's the early blues-related swing. I just love that stuff. Other influences are Larry Sparks, Charles Sawtelle, Junior Barnhart and, of course, Jethro Burns.

DH: I listen to people like Dock Boggs, Skip James, Louis Armstrong, Robert Johnson, Sister Rosetta Tharp, and Billie Holiday. My method of growing and advancing as a musician is to listen to music, of all sorts and played on all instruments, all the time and see what soaks through. It's the osmosis method.

Kari, how did you come to be in Minnesota?
KL: I came to Redwing [Minnesota] Technical College to study in the Musical Stringed Instrument Repair program. I studied fretted instrument repair for a year. After that, one thing led to another and I ended up staying in Minnesota. I make my living now by teaching, performing and repairing instruments. I hooked up with Dave in 1995.

Dave, you also produce. . .
DH: I've been producing for almost twenty years; I produced a John Koerner record back in '82. I've recorded and produced a lot of other people since then, most recently the Sugar Kings album *Take Your Time, Mr. Brown*. Now I've got a studio in my basement where I record small groups (including us). I also have a radio program, the *Dakota Dave Hull Show* which can be heard at 9:00 am Thurdsdays, CST, on the internet at www.kfai.org.

You two have certainly been making a name for yourselves in the Midwest and on the West Coast. Any plans to broaden your horizons?
KL: I want to go east. . .

DH: Yeah, east, south, to Europe, to Japan. The real problem is the representation. Booking gigs is very time-consuming. We're seriously seeking good representation.

Good luck, you guys, and keep making beautiful music together.

[Interviewer's note: Dave Hull and Kari Larson have been reviewed in FGM in the past, and will be again in the future. For a critique of their playing, please reference those reviews. I'll just say that there's not a better-sounding, classier, more traditionally-innovative sound in acoustic music, and none recorded with higher quality. Any of their CDs will demonstrate equally these qualities.]

HULL-LARSON DISCOGRAPHY:
Double Cappuccino—1997, Arabica CF03;
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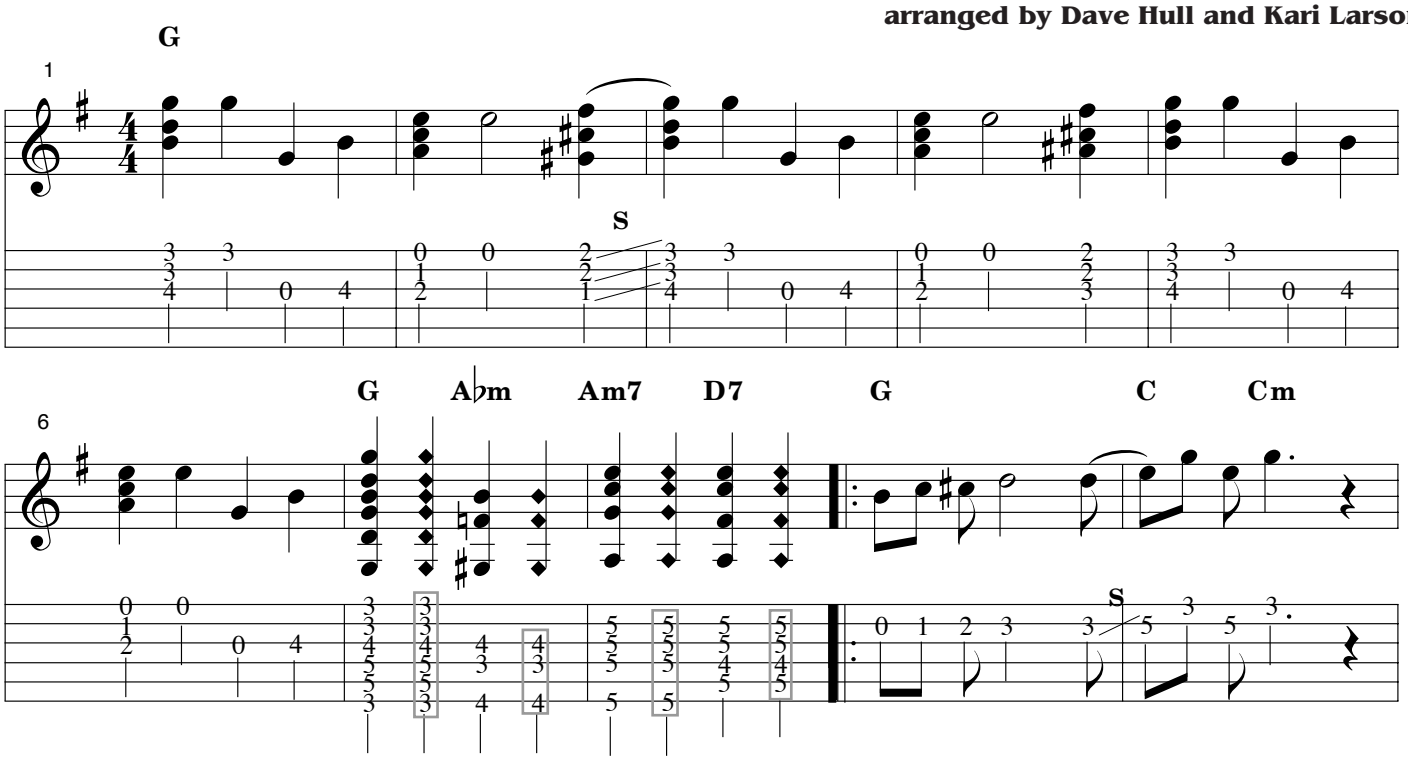
The Goose Is Getting Fat—1999, Arabica CF05.

Santa Claus Is Coming To Town

arranged by Dave Hull and Kari Larson



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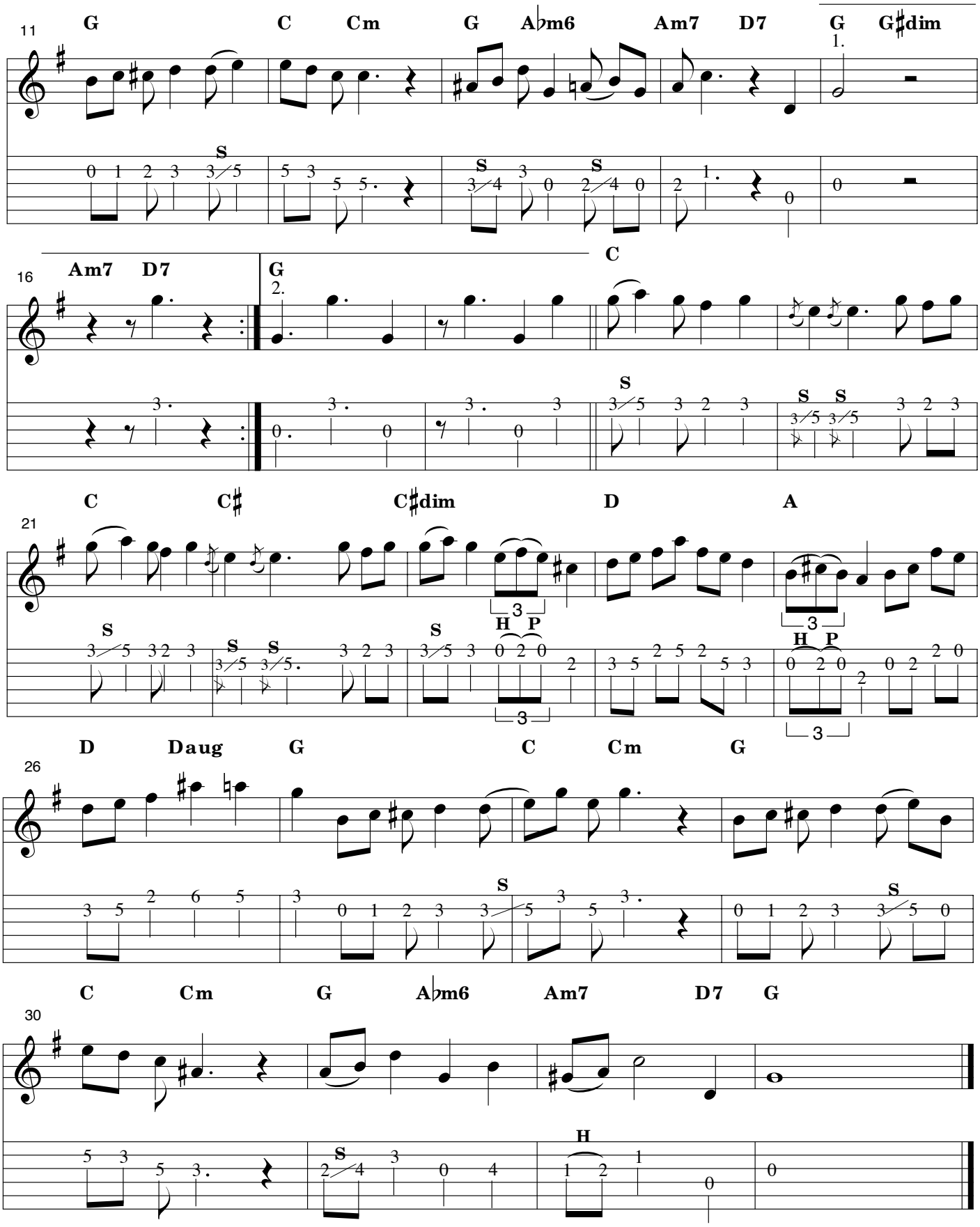
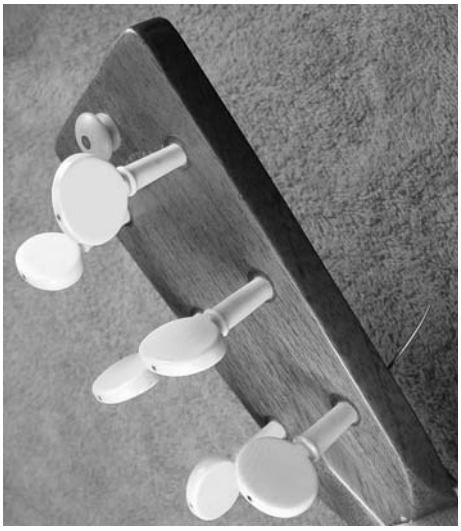

Guitar Maintenance and Repair

by Frank Ford

Installing Strap Buttons

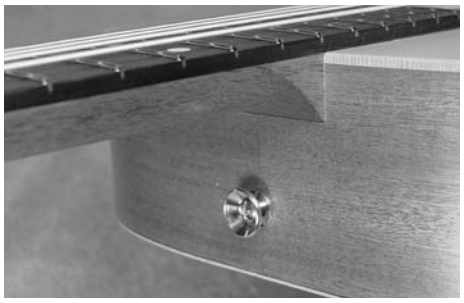
Standing up while playing guitar is not a new idea. That's why guitar straps have been available for over a century. In fact, the peghead of this hundred-year-old Martin guitar sports a special little button for tying on a "ribbon" or guitar strap:



It's interesting, too, to look at the old photos of the stars of the Grand Ole Opry. Virtually all of them have their guitar straps tied onto the peghead, under the strings right at the nut. Contrast that with today's bluegrass players. Most of them have their straps attached near the base of the neck. Now it's possible that the idea for this kind of strap attachment actually came from the players of electric instruments, many of which come from the factory with strap buttons already attached in that area. Solid body guitars are so much heavier, it stands to reason that the development of straps followed the development of those instruments.

For the player, having the strap attached at the base of the neck means that the instrument is all that much more maneuverable on stage. Also, the view of the neck and fingerboard is not obstructed by the strap.

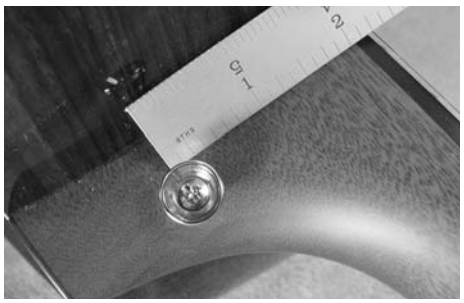
Only in the last couple of years, we've seen major manufacturers of flat top guitars actually including strap buttons as standard equipment. A leader in modern instrument production, Taylor is now installing strap buttons on most of their new guitars, even this "Baby" model:



The choice of strap button location is somewhat arbitrary, although there are some logical options.

By far, the most popular location is on the treble side of the heel, more or less centered vertically on the neck:

This Taylor guitar has a bolt-on neck and the manufacturer specifies a location for the button to avoid those internal bolts:



Most manufacturers do not define the best location for their straps, so if you have a guitar with a bolted neck, it's wise to have a general idea of the location of the bolts. In almost all instances, it's safe to locate the button near or very slightly below the center on the treble side of the neck.

Another popular location for the strap button is in the bass side of the guitar near the neck:

Here, it's vital to make sure the button screw is securely mounted. Martin guitars, for example, have wide neck blocks, so such a screw can be installed directly through the side and into the heavy mahogany neck block. Other makers, such as Santa Cruz Guitar Company, use a narrow neck block that won't accept a strap button. On those instruments, it's absolutely necessary and reasonable to add a bit of reinforcement on the inside to accommodate the screw installation. Any competent luthier can handle this job quickly and easily.

Guitars with a wide flat heel seem to ask for a strap button right in the center:

With the button in this location, the strap is held very securely and the guitar balances well.

Fearful of detracting from resale value, some players will have the button installed directly in the heel cap:

Later, the button can be removed, and the heel cap replaced. In virtually all other installations, it's functionally impossible to remove the strap button without leaving some trace of a filled screw hole.

Check out this one:

Not only does this guitar balance poorly because of the strap button location, but the installation has done the maximum damage to the appearance of the guitar. There will be no chance of removing the button without having an unsightly hole to touch up in the highly figured maple back.

In order for the button to hold the strap securely, it's important that the strap draw at about ninety degrees to the button, just as it does at the end pin:

Any of these strap button locations will serve well. While the guitar only weighs five pounds or so, it's important to remember that the player often "leans" on the guitar, putting several times that load on the strap and button.

Installing your own strap button is a very reasonable do-it-yourself job, requiring only a bit of common sense and woodworking experience. The biggest single problem is to drill an appropriate pilot hole for the screw.

Just for a bit of shock value, here's what happened to a 1955 Martin D-18 when its owner jammed a screw into the heel:

I don't know if the pilot hole was undersize or simply forgotten. In either case, this kind of damage is extremely rare, and virtually impossible with a little care in selecting the pilot drill size.

Here's how I do it:

First, I pick out a pilot drill:

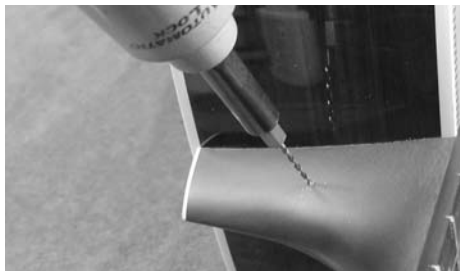
I'm holding the screw alongside the drill, and trying to estimate the "minor diameter" of the screw threads. I want to use a drill that's at least as big as the solid portion of the screw down inside between the sharp spiral threads.

If I hold the screw directly in front of the drill and squint really hard, I would like to see just a trace of the drill peeking out from behind the threads along the length of the screw:

This is a bit bigger pilot screw size than most cabinet makers would use, but then we're not hanging a door here, and we're certainly not testing the tensile strength of this screw with our guitar and strap!

Marking the location with a sharp pointy scribe, I'll be certain that my drill won't skate around on the curved surface of the heel:

I'm using a drill chucked into my electric screwdriver, but a hand drill, or Makita type power drill would work just as well:



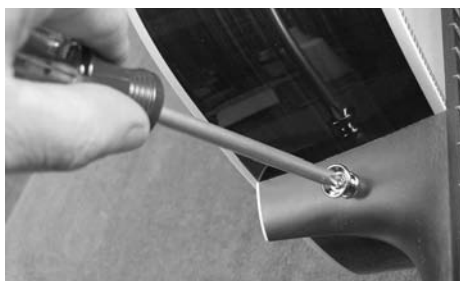
I drill my hole a bit deeper than the total length of the screw threads. I don't want the screw to "bind" as it goes in, because any slip with my screwdriver would put a nasty ding in this nice HD-28!

Here's the strap button, with the screw in position:

Notice also that I have a little leather washer (I cut my own) on the screw. I use this kind of washer on any strap button going into a curved surface, to avoid propagating any cracks or blisters in the finish.

If the button is going into an especially hard wood, such as maple, I'll strike an old candle across the threads to lubricate them with paraffin.

A few clockwise twists with my screwdriver, and the button is securely installed:



The leather washer also gives the button a trim, finished look against the compound curves of this Martin heel.

Flatpicking & Folk/Acoustic Rock

by John Tindel

Welcome to the second installment of the Brit invasion of *Flatpicking Guitar Magazine*. Last issue we checked out a vintage Led Zeppelin song. Let's go back in time a little farther.

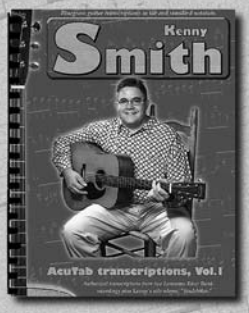
Back in the early sixties, the newly exploding face of popular music was forever changed by four young mop-heads from Liverpool. Two of these amazing young men in particular, John Lennon and Paul McCartney, through some kind of arrangement with aliens, the devil, or some secret muse to which the rest of us have little or no access to, were responsible for the creation of some of the most diverse, original and enduring music of the last century. Their 1965 release *Help* shows the same sort of range as their later work would, from McCartney's timeless "Yesterday," to the rollicking "Ticket to Ride." One of my favorites from that record has always been that foot-tapper "I've Just Seen a Face." From the cool cross-picked intro section, to the almost country/bluegrassy alternating bass line, you can hear that the lads were defiantly listening to the more tradition American forms of the music (maybe even some bluegrass) that was happening "across the pond" at the time.

So, let's delve into this ditty, shall we? As usual, because of space considerations, we'll only be looking at the intro section,and the solo section repeated twice, once similar to the record and then flatpicked a little.

The intro part consists of two guitar parts. The rhythm part (a 12-string on the record) and the lead part. The high guitar employs a rolling triplet cross-picked pattern with a 6/8 feel over a 4/4 beat. As you move up the neck with the four opening chords, slide and connect the notes on the G string. Pick a down stroke on the first lower note and an up stroke on the second, higher one. Do it slow and clean before trying to speed it up to tempo.

The first time through the solo part is a beginners dream—a one string solo! You can play this as straight or as swung as you like. I choose a middle balance between the two—mostly eight notes with a few dotted eighths and sixteenths thrown in. The second time is a little more gusseyed up statement of the basic melody. Feel free to come up with your own variations just as I did. I am sure John and Sir Paul won't mind! People have been jamming along to their music for almost 40 years now and it is not likely to change anytime soon.

Acutab Guitar



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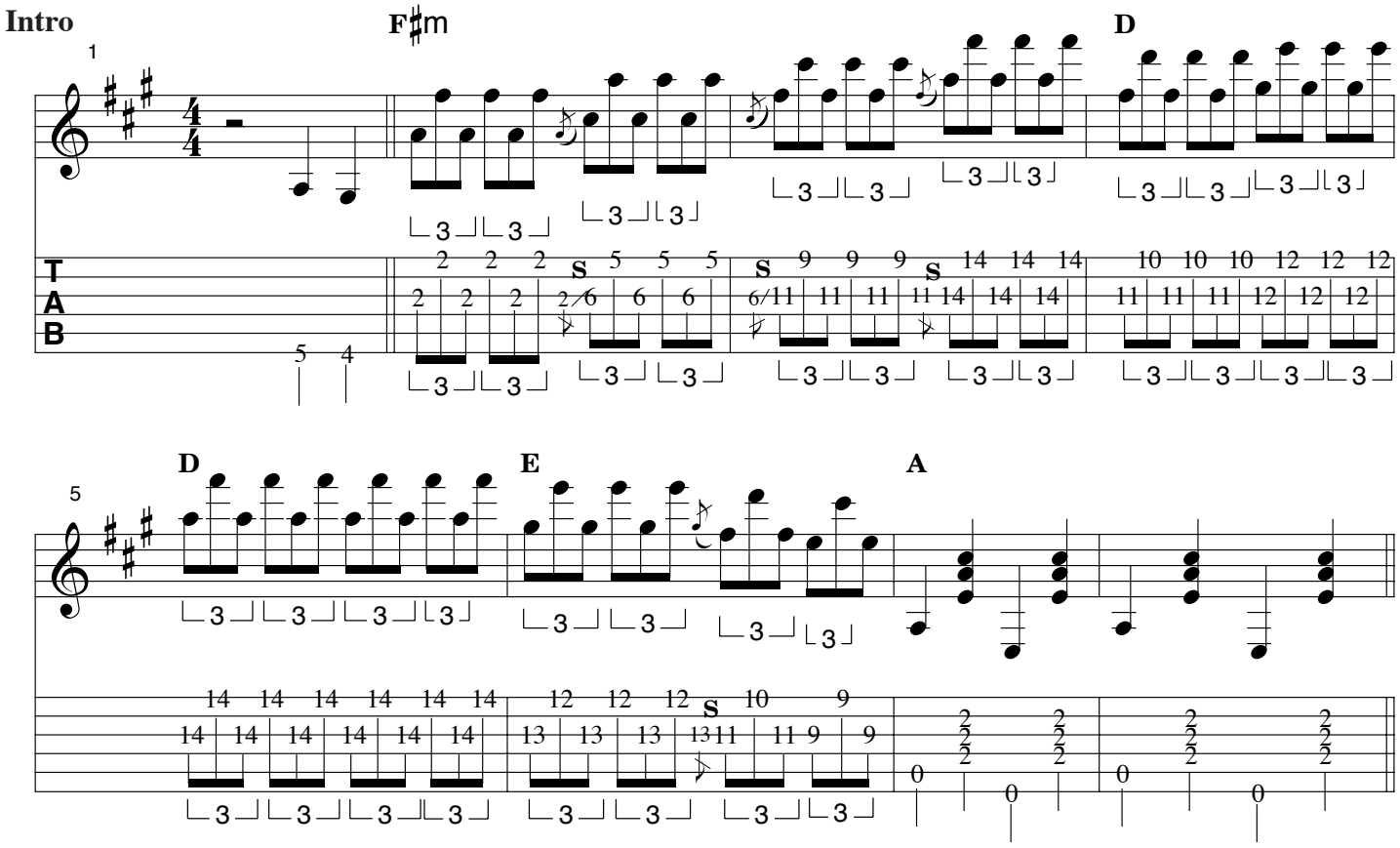
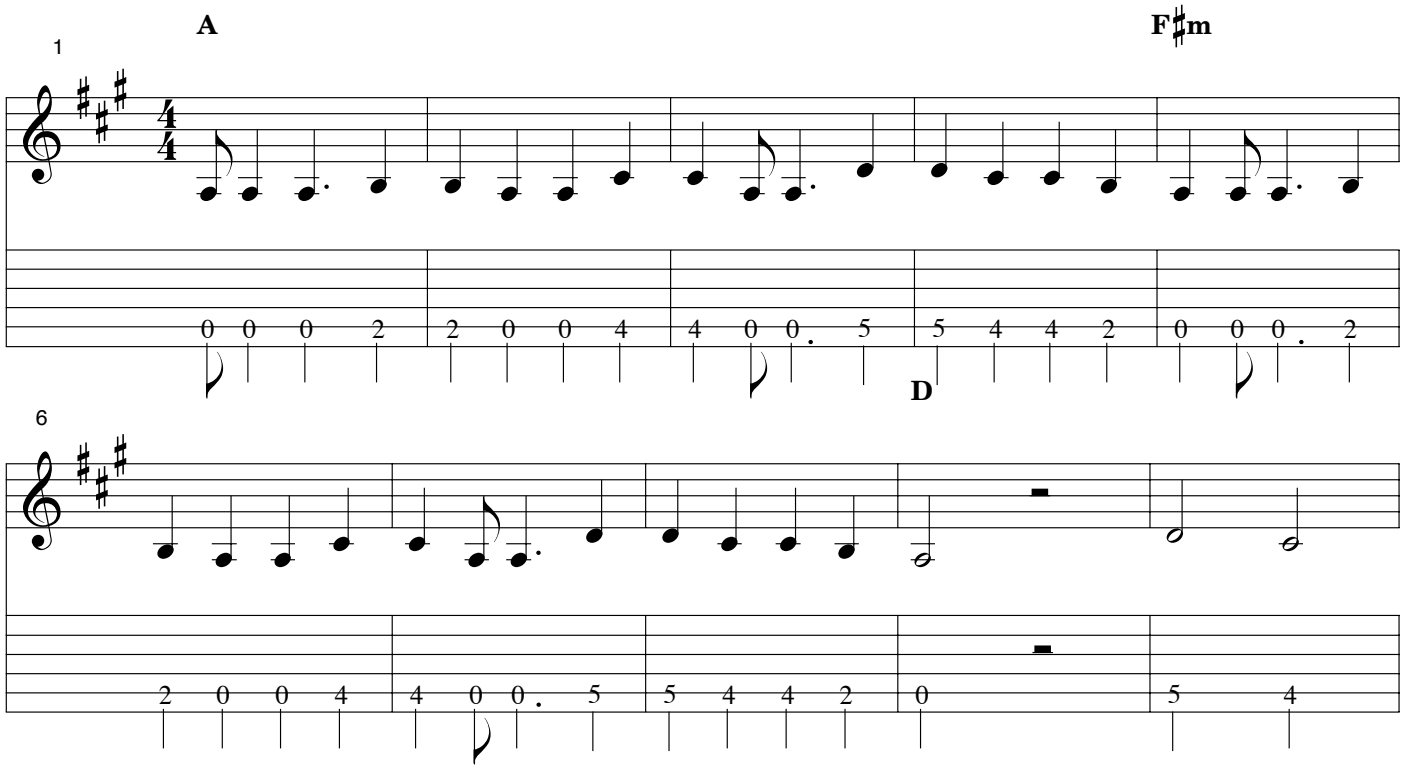
I've Just Seen A Face

Arranged by John Tindel



Solo



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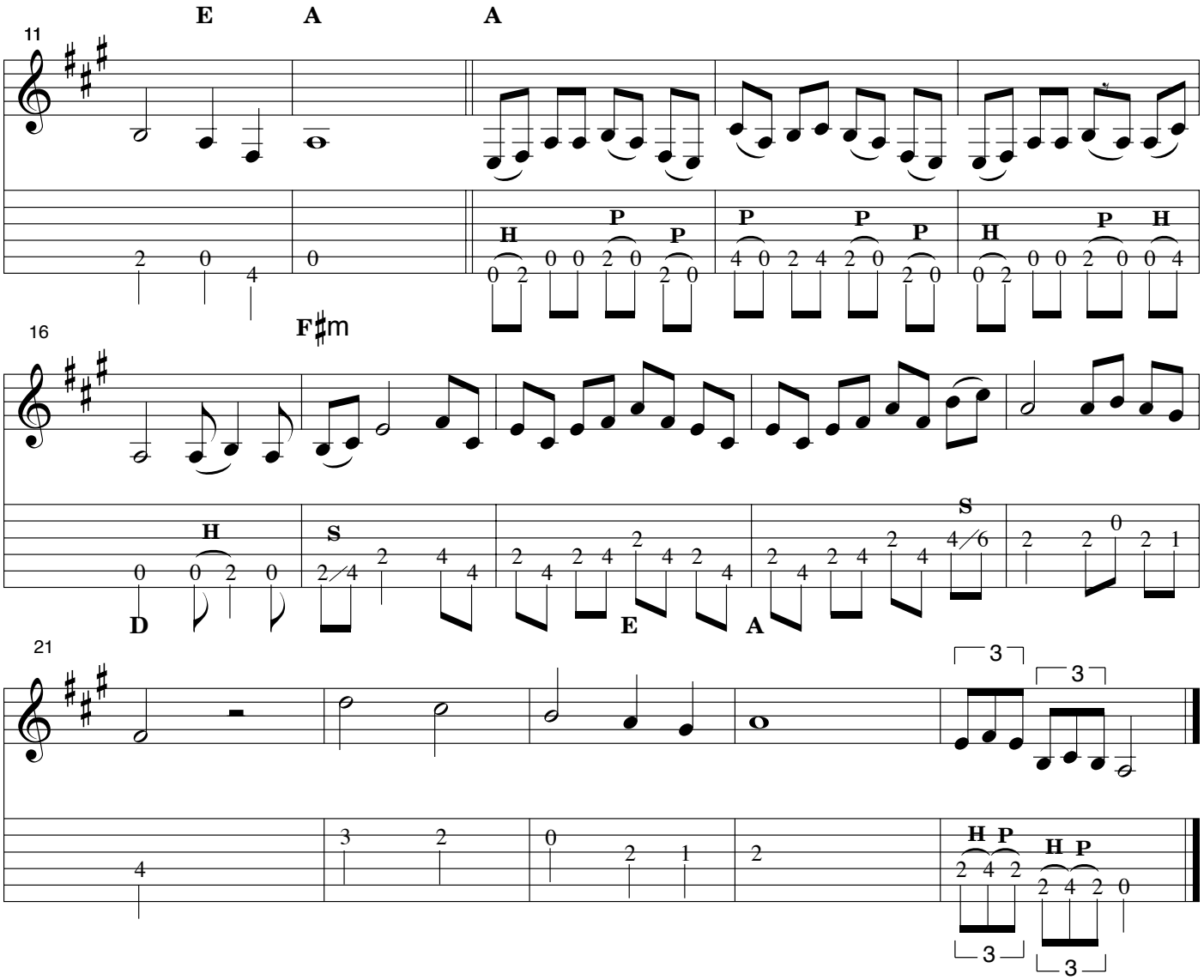
Musician's Worshop Fan

After reading David Moultrup's review of Musician's Workshop's *Easy Gospel Guitar Solos* video in the July/August 2000 *Flatpicking* issue, I feel compelled to respond. I have been a fan of the Musician's Workshop instructional videos because of their consistent quality and attention to effective elements of instruction. Dan Huckabee's presentation in *Easy Gospel Guitar Solos* follows in this same vein. The various teaching aids such as repetition, explanations, crisp close-ups, screen tablature displays and Dan's straightforward, clear teaching style are an asset to the beginning level student attempting to learn via the medium of video. The student is challenged with the thoughtful progression of difficulty level in songs with their variations of strumming and sliding. I believe that the *Easy Gospel Guitar Solos* video delivers a succinct, congruent, student- friendly approach to the Carter family style and would be a valuable addition to a beginner's video lesson library.

Sincerely,

Suzie Shelby

Origin of Reels

You've put out another great issue of *Flatpicking Guitar Magazine*. I'd like to offer some clarification on a comment in Craig Vance's introduction to "Miller's Reel." He wrote, "like most reels it is of Scotch/Irish origin."

In American usage, the term Scotch/Irish refers to people of Scottish descent who, having lived for a time in the north of Ireland, migrated to the American colonies in the eighteenth century. Many reels (typically called "breakdowns" by American old-time musicians) are of American origin. Many other reels are from Ireland and many are from Scotland. There are also reels of English, French-Canadian and Cape-Breton origin. The majority of reels are probably not of "Scotch/Irish" origin. I write this only to clarify a point that may be of interest to some readers. Craig writes a great column and I enjoyed playing his version of "Miller's Reel."

Keep up the good work.

Dan Mozell

Flatpicking Guitar

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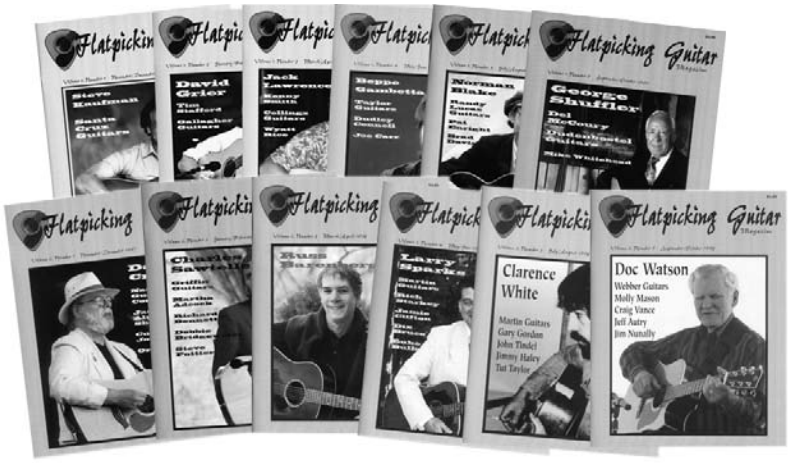
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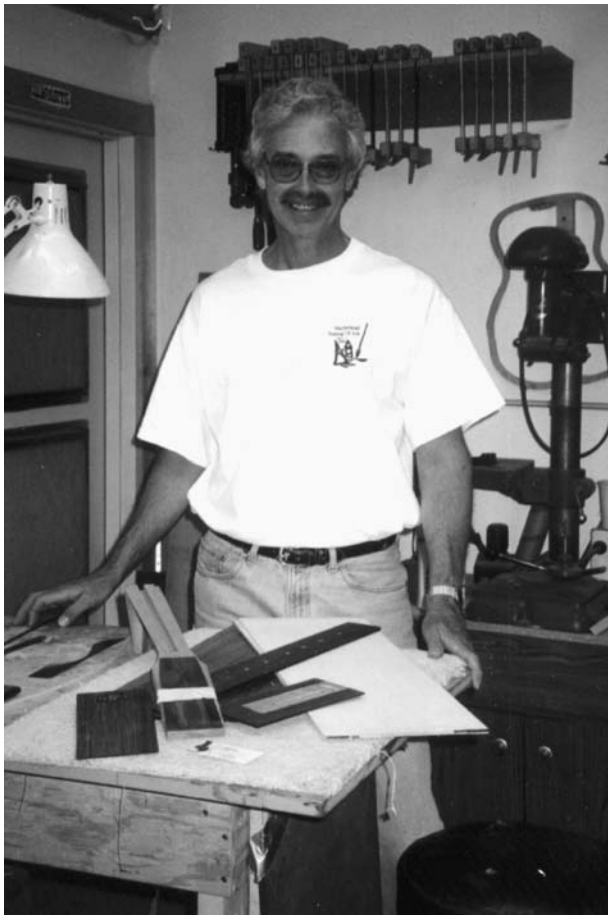
Tippin Guitars

by

Mike Armistead



There are many avenues to becoming a master guitar builder, but not many arrive at their profession the way Bill Tippin of Marblehead, Massachusetts, did. "My background was in furniture and boat building," Tippin says. "I was born and raised in Pensacola, Florida, and it was here that I was exposed to old world wood craftsmanship in furniture making and boat building." Tippin's passion for boats and sailing eventually brought him to Marblehead, a colonial fishing village that claims to be the birthplace of the American Navy and is a mecca for sailing enthusiasts. Before long his passion for working on boats gave way to a talent for building extraordinary high-end custom guitars.

"I didn't learn guitar building in school or a formal course of study. I am self educated, and I probed every book available for information on guitars. I talked to several qualified builders to help me with the quality of my first guitars. I ordered a kit from Martin and studied for four to five months before I started work on it. It came out real well. Then I built instruments and did repairs for friends starting in 1978. In 1992 I decided it was time to go into guitar production full-time, and that was when I founded the Tippin Guitar Company."

Tippin Guitar Company now shares the back end of a large, water-front building also occupied by a large yacht yard. Tippin still sails when he can, though he no longer works on boats.

The five-room guitar shop is very neat and clean. Tippin and his staff of three produce between fifty-five to sixty-five guitars a year depending on complexity. Since eighty percent of his instruments are customized, Tippin also maintains his repair expertise, along with his staff. He is somewhat selective in this work, catering to higher end restorations. They brought new life to an early-seventies Guild D-50 of mine, turning its dead body into a wonderfully punchy and playable instrument that now really shines.

The first thing one notices in the Tippin Guitar shop is his inventory of truly exotic tonewoods. "I am a real wood nut," Tippin proudly proclaims. "My grandfather was a furniture maker, and Pensacola was the largest importer of mahogany from the Philippines, Honduras, Cuba and the Dominican Republic. I personally search for the best wood possible. When I order wood from a supplier I scrutinize it and return the pieces that are not the best."

Tippin uses a wide range of woods in his work. On his seven standard models he uses traditional woods like Honduran Mahogany, Maple, and Indian Rosewood for backs and sides, and high grade Sitka spruce for tops. There are a myriad of custom options from there. He offers Brazilian rosewood, Flame koa, quilted mahogany, walnut, cocobola, Asian rosewood, Cuban mahogany, and other choices for back and sides. For tops he also uses Adirondack red, Alpine (German blue, yellow, and silver), and Englemann spruce, as well as highly figured Sitka and Alpine spruce. On occasion he is able to secure centuries-old spruce brought up from the depths of the Great Lakes for something truly out of the ordinary. Lately he has had great success with Asian Rosewood as a competitor with Brazilian. Tippin is constantly on the lookout for supplies of great wood.

For those who are interested in a truly unique custom instrument, an appointment can be made at the Tippin Guitar Company to select the specific pieces of wood to be used. Tippin will take you on a tour of each type of wood, explaining its virtues and how it matches with other types to build a complete instrument. You can personally pick out your top, sides, finish, and other features such as inlays to build a one-of-a-kind instrument. Not only was this a fun experience for myself, but it enthralled my wife and made her excited about dropping big bucks for a totally custom guitar. This service is reserved for serious buyers only, however. Regular and custom orders can also be placed by conventional means.

Tippin Guitars start in price at around $2,500 for his specialty, the OMT, and $2700 for a mahogany dreadnought without a case. Prices escalate from there and can run to $15,000 for those with deep pockets or a desire for the ultimate instrument.

What is your inspiration in guitar building?

My designs are influenced by vintage Martins. They are not copies, but have a traditional shape with different bracing for enhancing other tonal qualities. We correlate the thickness of the top with the thickness of the braces, so they ring together as one piece. All this has to be considered to match other specifications on the instrument, such as body size, length of scale, and body depth.

What sound do you aim for?

That is impossible to say. Our goal is to make each instrument its best. I want a guitar that won't be bass dominant, but

balanced, with a good mid-range and treble in a large guitar, while still maintaining a strong bass. We build to maximize sustain and balance. Bass tends to become more dominant in Indian rosewood/Sitka spruce combinations with larger guitars, so we compensate for that in the design of the guitar. On our OM and other finger-style guitars we work to make sure the bass and treble are equal, yet with a full, rich sound.

What are the necks of your guitars like?

The necks are fairly traditional, but are slightly thinner. Too thin loses sustain, since mass holds sustain. They are an old/new world mix with a slight V and are made of mahogany with ebony fingerboards standard. They are finished with a shaded tint, not quite a sunburst.

What other standard features do your guitars have?

Tippin guitars have a nitrocellulose lacquer finish and come standard with Schaller tuners. Waverly tuners are available and are standard on slot-heads. The saddles and nuts are high grade bone. Ivoroid bindings are standard with wood bindings available.

What other creative innovations do your guitars display?

We combine classic and contemporary elements to produce instruments suitable for a wide range of musical styles. We consider our OMT to be the holy grail of our guitars. It has a much bigger sound due to its bracing and deeper body. We also offer twelve-fret dreadnoughts and OOO's for finger pickers; cutaways, hybrid guitars such as deep-body versions suitable for both flatpicking and fingerstyle; and more. Fingerboards are available in several widths. We also offer custom inlays, bindings, headstocks, and bridges.

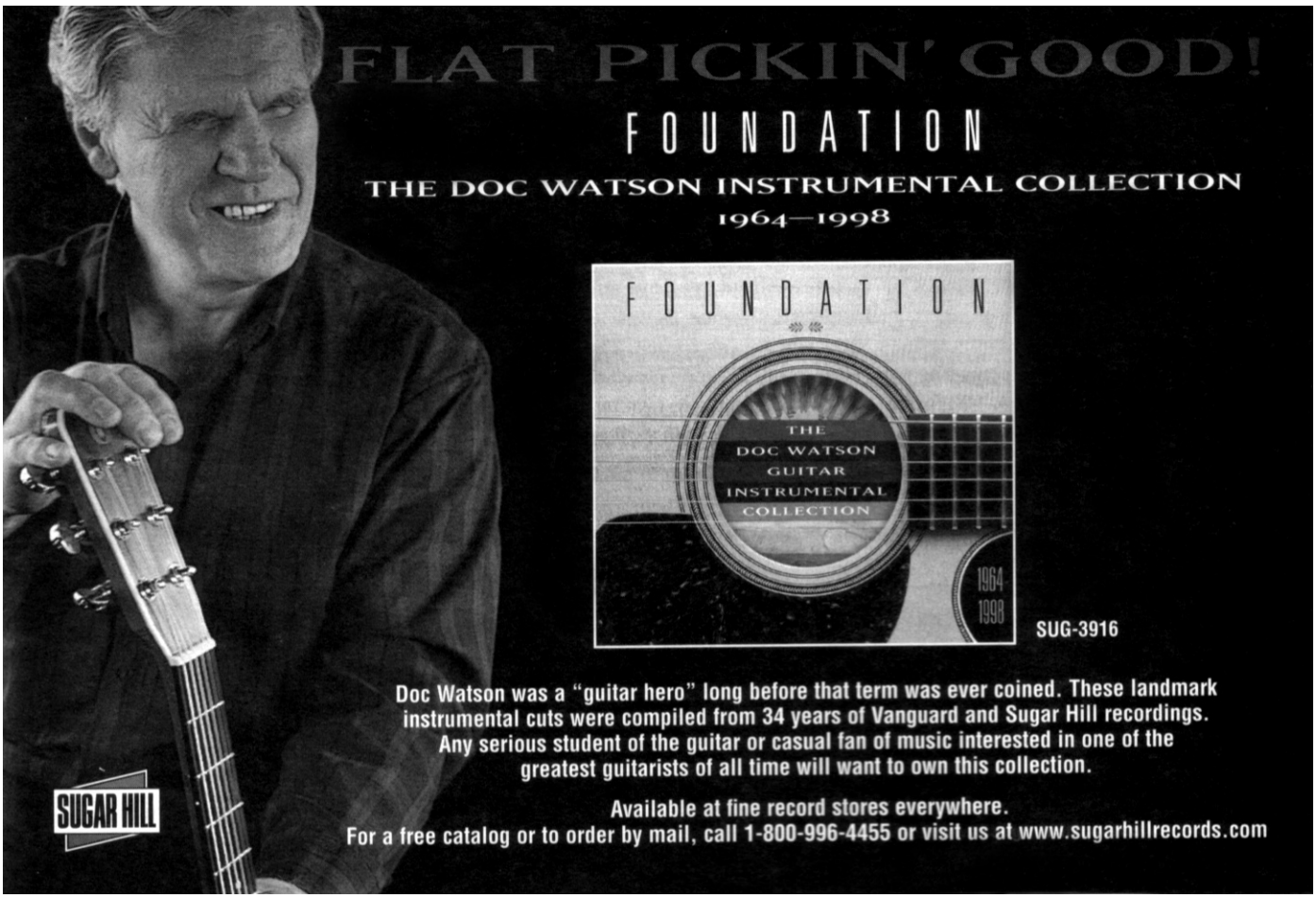
What do you offer that would be of special interest to flatpickers?

We offer a fine Dreadnought that excels in clarity and power, and our Jumbo is our most versatile guitar. We also have deep-body OMs (the OMT-DB) and shallow body Jumbo's (the SJT) that are suitable for aggressive flatpicking.

Why should a guitarist buy a custom guitar from you when there are many good factory guitars on the market?

Tippin Guitars caters to custom needs. Besides giving our customers a range of sizes and options, we also maximize the potential sound of each guitar. We voice all the woods in a guitar to itself. Tops are sanded to varying thicknesses according to stiffness to bring out maximum volume and tone. We voice the braces rather than scalloping them, and tone the back and top. That way each guitar pushes out its ultimate sound; each will sound as good as it can. Factory guitars are mostly standardized and can vary in sound quality. Our attention to detail in each instrument gives the customer confidence that he or she is getting the best guitar possible with that Tippin sound.

Tippin Guitars are available at a growing number of dealers in Northeast, South, Midwest and West Coast. They can also be contacted at Tippin Guitar Co., 3 Beacon Street, Marblehead, MA 01945; (781) 631-5749. They have an excellent web site at www.tippinguitar.com.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WINFIELD 2000:
The National Flatpicking Guitar Championship

The 29th annual National Flatpicking Guitar Championship was held at the Walnut Valley Festival in Winfield, Kansas, on September 16, 2000. The field of 35 contestants included five former national champions, although only one of these former champions was able to make it to the final round. The field also included champions from various other contests around the country who had earned a spot in the national championship through their victory at these other contests held earlier this year. In addition to various regional contest champions, the winners of the contests at Merlefest, Rockygrass, Steve Kaufman's Flatpicking Camp, and Wayne Henderson's festival competed in the national championship this year. As always, the competition was fierce and all the competitors played well.

After each contestant had played arrangements of two tunes, the judges picked five finalists. This year, the participants who made it to the final round this year were: Scott Fore, Steve Lewis, Matt Lindsey, Jason Fowler, and Robert Shafer. Each of these finalists was called up to play two more tunes in the final round.

Scott Fore, a 40-year-old accountant from Radford, Virginia, was the winner of Wayne Henderson's festival contest in 1999. This was Scott's first appearance at the national championships in Winfield. A single parent of three children, it was Scott's oldest son who convinced him he should go to Kansas and compete in the contest. Scott competed this year with the Wayne Henderson guitar that he had won at Wayne's festival last year.

Steve Lewis of Todd, North Carolina, also a talented banjo player, had finished third place in last year's contest. He was also playing a Henderson guitar.

Matt Lindsey, age 30 from Dunbar, West Virginia, had placed 2nd in the 1992 national championship.

Jason Fowler, a 31-year-old music teacher from Toronto, Ontario, Canada, who admits that he plays more fingerstyle guitar than he does flatpicking, had won third place honors in the national fingerstyle championship in 1997. That third place finish had inspired him to make the trip to Winfield this year to once again compete in the fingerstyle competition. One of Jason's flatpicking students in Canada told him, "You are going all that way, why don't you go ahead and compete in the flatpicking championship too?" Jason did not make the cut in the fingerstyle competition this year.

Winfield 2000 Champ Robert Shafer

The last finalist was Robert Shafer, age 36, of Elkview, West Virginia. Robert was the only former national champion to make it to the finals this year. He won the championship in 1983 and had also placed second in 1991. Robert played his Taylor 410-CE in the contest.

After all of the finalist had played two tunes in the final round, the judges decision was announced backstage and the three winners chose which guitar they would take home. After the prize selection process was complete, the winners were announced to the audience and the players came out to receive their awards. The first player to step out and accept his award was third place winner Jason Fowler. Jason accepted his Taylor guitar from Bob Taylor himself and was given his third place trophy. Jason treated the audience to a fingerstyle tune in order to show them give them a taste of his other talent.

Next the announcer brought out second place winner Scott Fore. Scott, backed up by finalist Steve Lewis, played his arrangement of "Angeline the Baker" for the audience and then accepted his new Collings D2H guitar from Jim Baggett of Mass Street Music.

Finally, it was time to bring out this year's champion. When the name Robert Shafer was announced, I don't think anyone in the audience was surprised. Robert had played superbly in both the elimination round and the finals. In fact, many of the other contestants commented after the contest that they couldn't feel bad about losing to Robert's flawless performance. Robert played a J.T. Perkins tune called "Grassy" and the contest standard "Little Rock Getaway" in the preliminary round and followed with "Cotton Patch Rag" and his arrangement of "Bill Bailey" in the finals. Robert chose a Martin 000-28VS guitar as his first place prize.

For those who wish to know more about this year's champion, Robert Shafer, see the July/August 2000 issue of *Flatpicking Guitar Magazine*. Robert was featured in our "CD Highlight" column. Robert's arrangement of Westphalia Waltz was transcribed in the magazine and this tune was featured on both the audio companion to that issue as well as our *Flatpicking 2000* sampler CD.

Next year the Walnut Valley Festival will host the 30th annual National Flatpicking Championships. To celebrate the 30th year, festival promoter Bob Redford has invited all past top three place holders to compete against each other in a special "Maters" competition.

Kaufman's Corner

by Steve Kaufman

Hi friends, and welcome back to my corner of the flatpicking world. This issue I would like to bring you back to the land of the polkas. I recorded this tune with Robin Kessinger on our *Star of the County Down* CD. It's a fun one to play and you will appreciate getting away from the standard three-chord song and into a great three-part tune.

I arranged this one with a nice passage that I've heard Robin play. Measure 4 has a set of hammer-on, pull-off, triplet, double stops. Use the 1st and 2nd fingers to fret them. Some of the fingerings in the D7 measures might be a stretch but just seeing or hearing about my short fingers will add some encouragement.

The [B] part has some nice cross picking sections. I've put two different rolls in this part. The first is a forward cross picking roll and the second is a forward/backward roll. Hold the fretted notes throughout the rolls to give the sustain needed.

After the [B] part is played out twice you should repeat the first part one time and then go onto the [C] part. This is the part in the key of D. Start the [C] part in 2nd position so that the first finger will hit all the 2nd frets. Notice that you have to trill the 2-4-2 frets and then slide the 1st finger back to the first fret. Use the fingerings as they are marked.

You are sure to have fun with this great tune and to hear Robin and I play it off each other call 800-FLATPIK and order the CD or get it off the web at www.flatpik.com.

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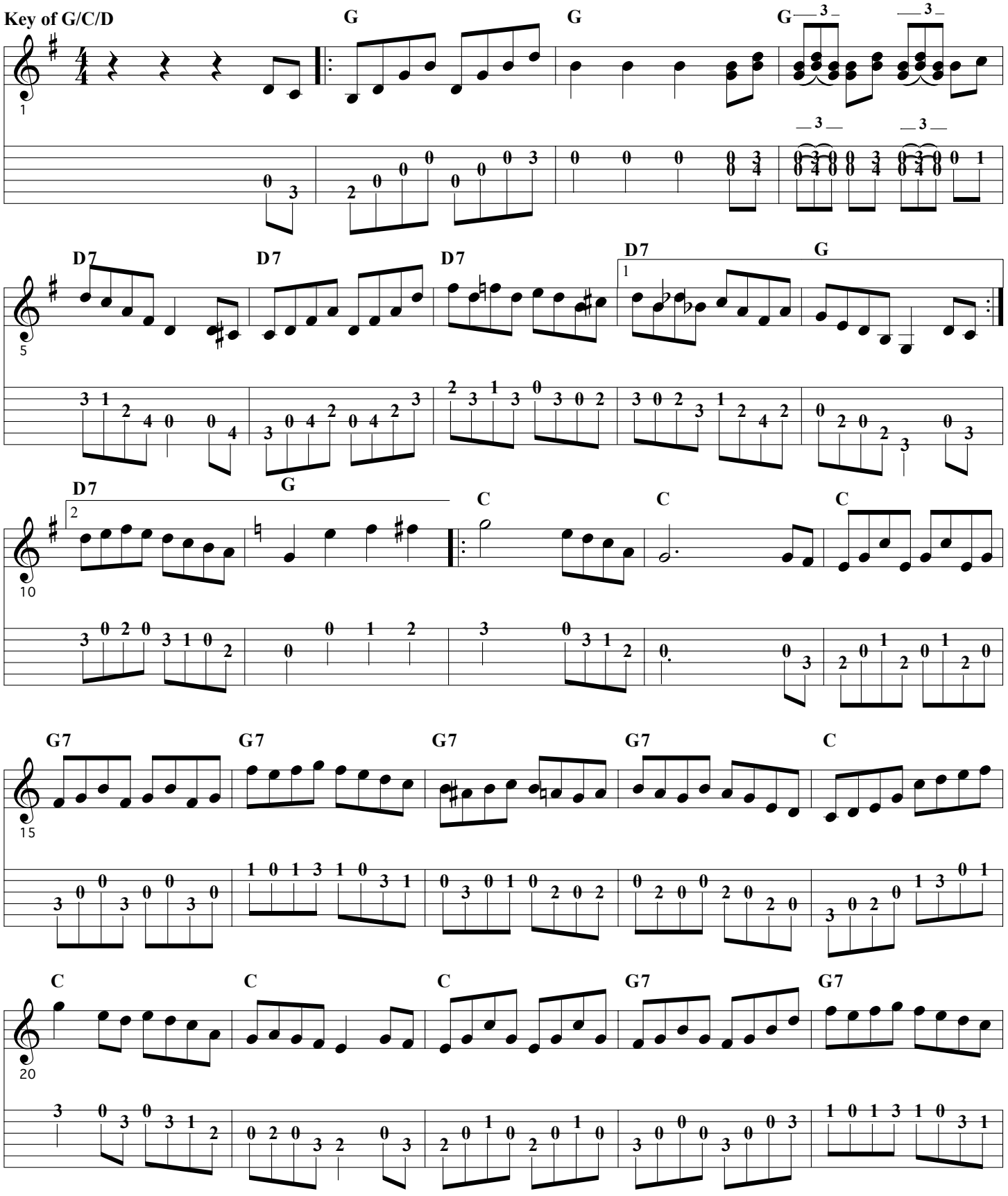
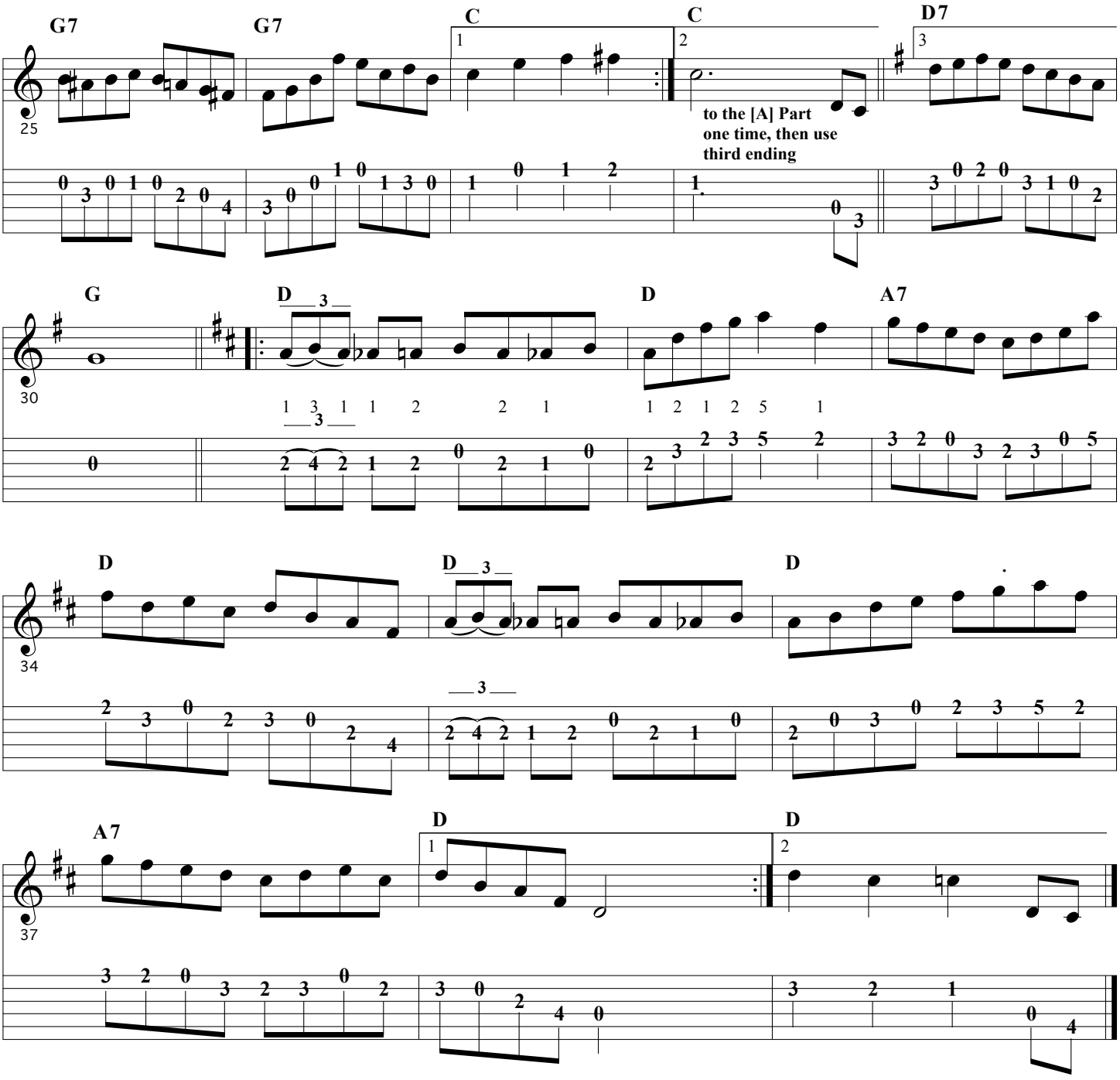
Clarinet Polka

Arranged by Steve Kaufman

Clarinet Polka (con't)

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Star Spangled Guitar

by Peter Pupping

Editor's Note: Guitarist Peter Pupping sent me this story via email simply to releate a magnificent experience he had at a gig one evening. He said that I could publish it if I thought our readers might like to read about this experience. After wiping the tears from my eyes, I thought that this would be a great story to share with you. Thanks to Peter for letting us share this experience with him.

I am full time performing guitarist. I play classical, jazz, Latin and acoustic contemporary guitar and am invited frequently to play for parties, conventions, weddings, etc....At a recent performance I was invited to play at Mrs. Audrey Cage's home. Mrs. Cage was hosting a party in honor of her late husband a World War II general. Her guests included three living four-star generals and other high ranking officers from World War II and the famed astronaut's wife of James Lovell (Apollo 13). I was hired to play background music and didn't expect to get noticed.

Two hours prior to arriving at Mrs. Cage's home I received a phone call from Mrs. Cage. She asked me if I would work up a rendition of the Marine Corp Hymn. I was amused and quietly thought to myself that playing the Marine Corp Hymn on guitar was almost satirical if not down right hilarious. I imagined all the times these four-star generals heard this hymn in full regalia performed by the United States Marine Corp Band. I asked Mrs. Cage if she thought it appropriate and she insisted that I perform the piece.

Upon arriving I set up in a corner and expected the usual background routine (play nice music so people can talk, and not to loud). Into my first hour a touching encounter began to develop. Each one of the big brass generals made their way over to my corner and sat next to me and engaged me in conversation. They took a real interest in the music I was playing and asked me some thoughtful questions. They were kind, interesting and sincere. Not at all what I expected.

As the conversations ended my thoughts took me to World War II. Being an immigrant from the Netherlands, all the eye witness stories I heard from my grandparents and parents were coming back to me. I realized I was sitting in the same room with the military leaders who were part of the Allies that liberated my native country Holland (The Netherlands). I was touched by the sense of humanity in the hearts of these generals. I was keenly aware of their self sacrifice. My God! If it wasn't for the likes of these men I may never have existed as my parents suffered greatly and almost starved to death under Nazi occupation.

My number had come up and Mrs. Cage asked me to perform the Marine Corp Hymn. By this time I was already internally choked up as I weighed the gravity of my thoughts and realized an opportunity to thank these men was upon me. I stood up and shared my grandparents and parents story and thanked them for saving my family and countrymen. I was overcome with emotion. I sat down to play the Marine Corp Hymn and something very moving transpired. As I began the first few bars of the famed hymn all the the generals and officers in the room shot up to attention in full salute. Tears flowed down my cheeks as I prayed to God to be able to finish the hymn. There was no satire in the moment at all and the instrument I love, the guitar, served as a vehicle to thank a few good men for the freedom I enjoy.

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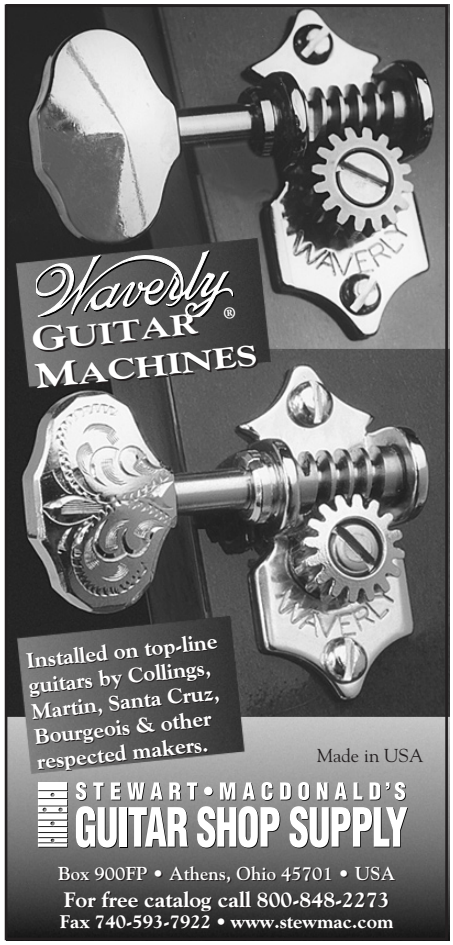
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Break Time

by Chris Jones

Connector Licks

I believe it was *Flatpicking Guitar* columnist Dan Huckabee who first coined the term "connector lick" back when we were collaborating on an audio guitar course on the subject of guitar breaks. It was either Dan or Winston Churchill, but in any case, it's a very useful term.

The connector lick is a musical phrase that bridges one melody note to another in the process of constructing or playing a guitar break. It can be several notes long or it can be simply a couple of notes that help fuse the melody notes together.

Many of you will ask, "Can I simply plug my stock licks in the right spot and have it be a connector lick?" The answer is "no," and don't ask again! Seriously though, that may work, but it depends on where the aforementioned "stock lick" begins and ends. I would say that to have good connector licks you should have both an arsenal of licks and the knowledge of scales, so you can piece things together as you go. The more you do this, the more the process of connecting melody notes will seem like second nature.

I've chosen a well-known standard, "Little Cabin Home On The Hill," as an example. The first step in the process for me is identifying the major melody notes in the song, the notes that make the song "Little Cabin Home On The Hill." These notes are written out in example 1. They correspond to the parts of the following lyrics that are in italics: *Tonight I'm alone without you my dear, it seems there's a longing for you still.*

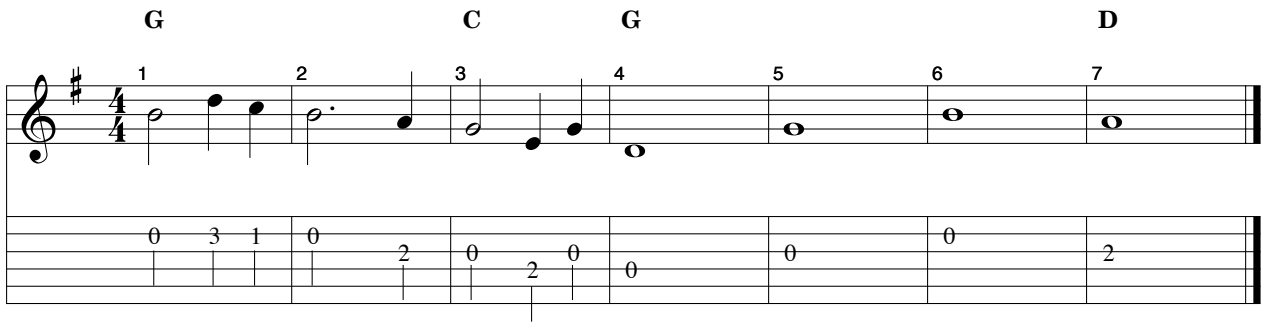
In example 2, I've shown the same section, but this time with connector licks bridging all of the notes together. Note that the lick that begins the break and takes us up to the first B note is what I refer to as a "kick-off lick," rather than a connector lick. The same can be said of the lick that begins the second half of the break. I also would classify the lick that follows the A note in measure number 8 (the A note is 2 on the 3rd string, or the word "still") as a "trail-off" because it's really ending a section, rather than bridging anything together.

Try to go through this first half and find all of the major melody notes that are now linked together with connector licks. I tried not to over-clutter, so they should be in there somewhere. You're on your own on the second half.

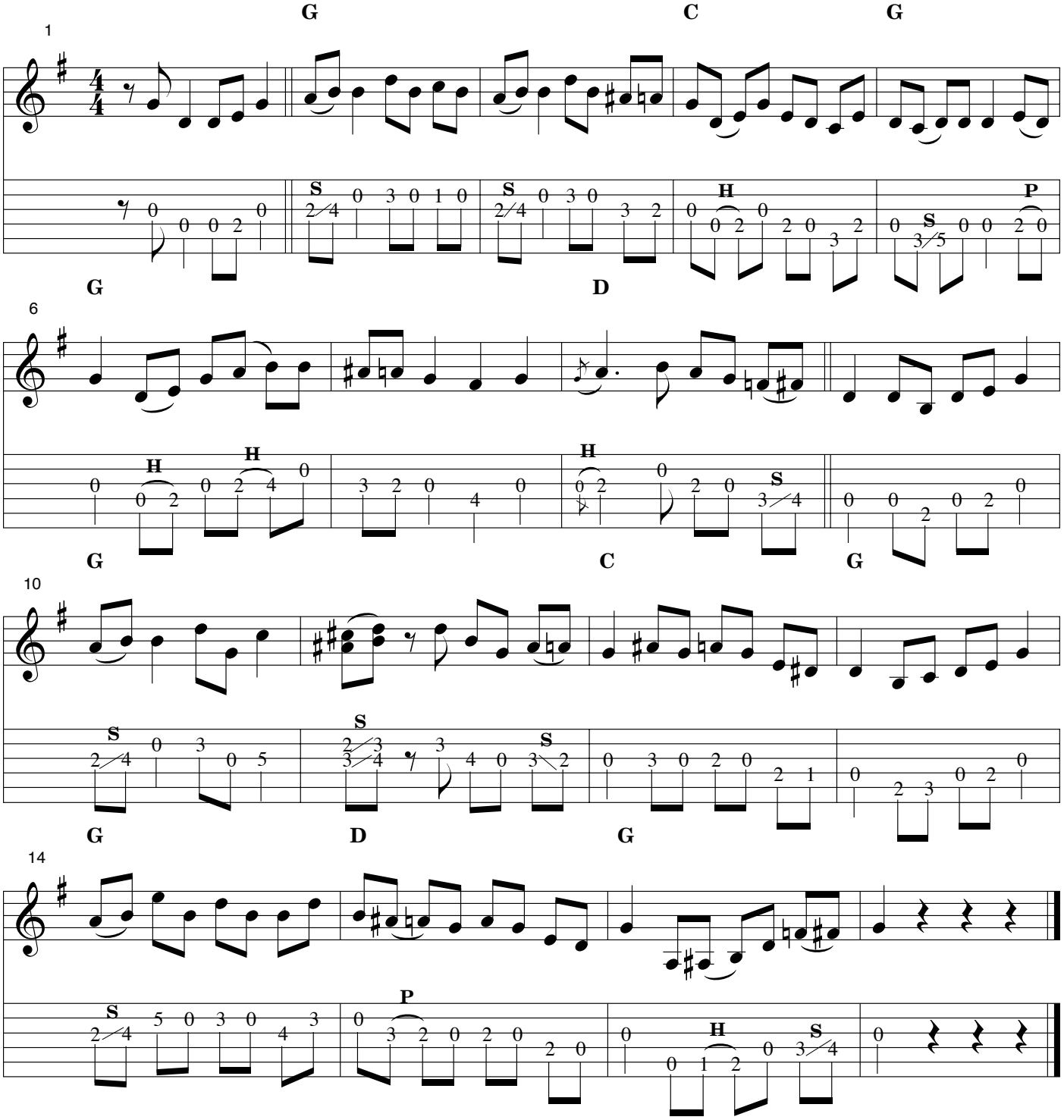
When you get used to this, you might try to connect those same melody notes using different licks—while making sure not to omit any melody notes—and see how it works for you. Another exercise would be to try to use some of the same licks and apply them to a similar song in the same key (if they all work in the same places, you'll find that you're actually still playing "Little Cabin Home on the Hill" and not the other song). Since the melody will be moving in different ways, you may find that simply altering your connector licks so that they carry you to different melodic points may work in some places. Experiment, and also try incorporating some of those stock licks of yours. They might work in some places too, provided they can get you smoothly from point A to point B.

Good luck, and remember to connect responsibly!

Example 1:



Little Cabin Home On The Hill

Arranaged by Chris Jones

NASHVILLE FLATTOP

By Brad Davis

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Building Your Lick Library: Key of B

In this column the focus is on the key of B. What? The key of B! You're probably saying to yourself "I'll never play in open B" (Bill Monroe would have said "that's no part of nothing")! That may be true for some, but if you feel comfortable with this key with a good number of licks in the B lick library then when a B chord change comes up in a song it will be effortless for you.

There are two views: you can play in an open key in several open positions without a capo or you can play in the open key in a capoed closed position applying open position lick phrases. For example, B licks can be created out of the standard B7 type position or out of the second fret open A position moved down two frets. Ah! I've just given away a clue to part of this mystery.

Yes: take some open A licks and move then down the neck two frets (if you have already got them memorized and have used your ear like I strongly suggested in the July/August issue) and you are way ahead of the game! Move open A licks two frets towards the soundhole and Voila! They become B licks. Wow!

Folks, it's not hard, you just have to think simply. Thinking simply and using your gut feeling is what improvising is all about. These licks are created out of the influences I had had throughout my picking experience and I hope you find them challenging.

I have also indicated the places where my Double-Down-Up technique will work. but please try these using the standard down-up-down first. Then if you feel brave, jump out there and give my new technique a try! Keep in mind that many open position B licks will have to be somewhat altered.

The best way to explain this is to talk about the nut position and the capo position. Think of the guitar's nut as the capo. It creates a permanent stationary stop for the fingers and notes. Same goes for the capo, but it acts as a temporary nut. So there will be some open position licks that will stretch back beyond the new temporary nut (the capo).

This is where you shouldn't think too much; just lay the lick phrase map down on the fretboard and let the capo take up the slack. You'll always have closed or fretted notes that were played in open position that, once capoed, will be open ringing notes because of the capo's position. But think simple: when creating any lick, consider the melody or something that will relate to the melody.

Developing Your Ear

I cannot overemphasize the importance of ear training. No matter how many licks or tunes you memorize from tab, it will be difficult to learn to improvise and stick close to a melody if you do not have a well-trained ear. Try to learn the licks presented here from the audio CD before looking at the tab. Practice along with the rhythm portion of the CD in order to help memorize the sounds rather than numbers written on a page.

If you practice along with the audio CD and enjoy this form of ear training, you might be interested in a new ear training course which I have developed for guitar. I have just completed Ear Training Level 1. It is available on two one-hour CDs and is packed with helpful guidelines on how to train your ear the right way. I trained my ear the very same way and wanted to show this to others. Now I can in this new double-CD course, Ear Training Level 1.

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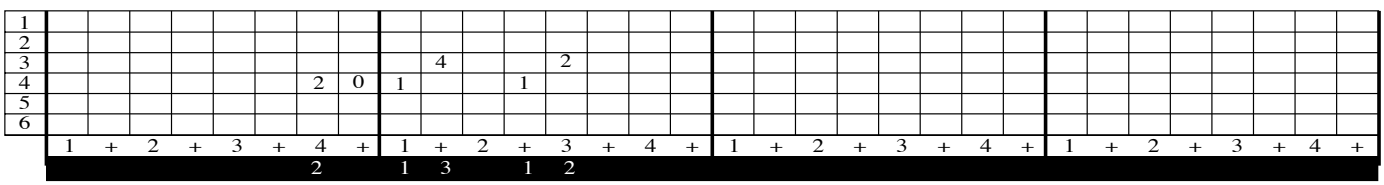
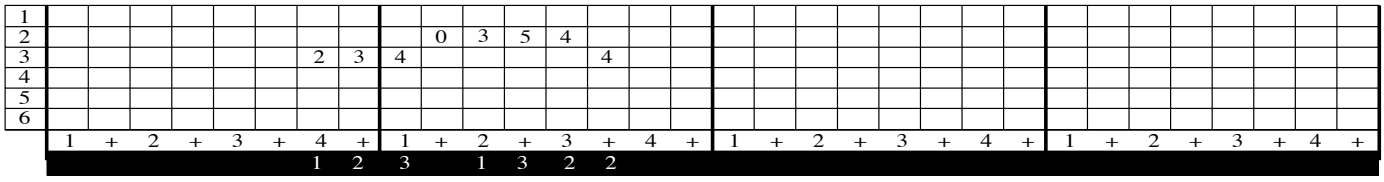
Key B
B-lick #1

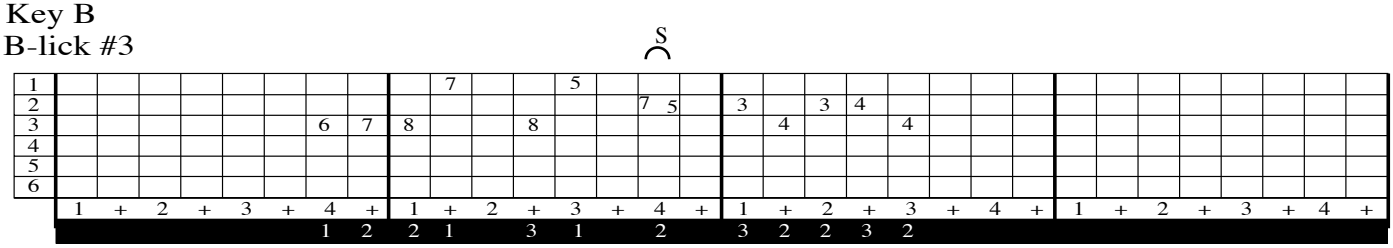


B Licks (con't)

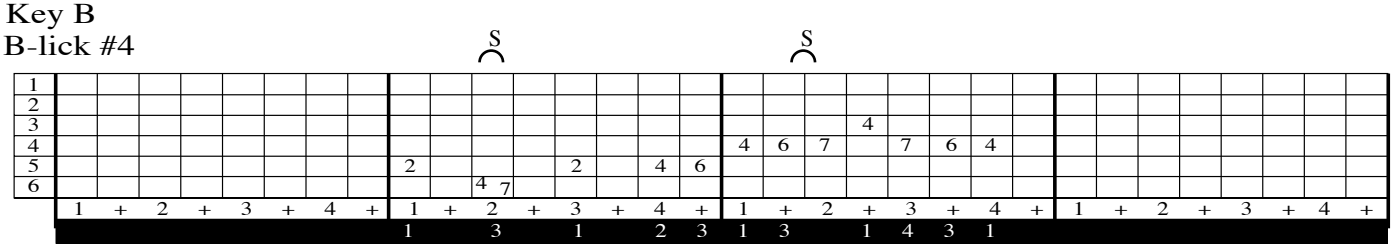
Key B
B-lick #2



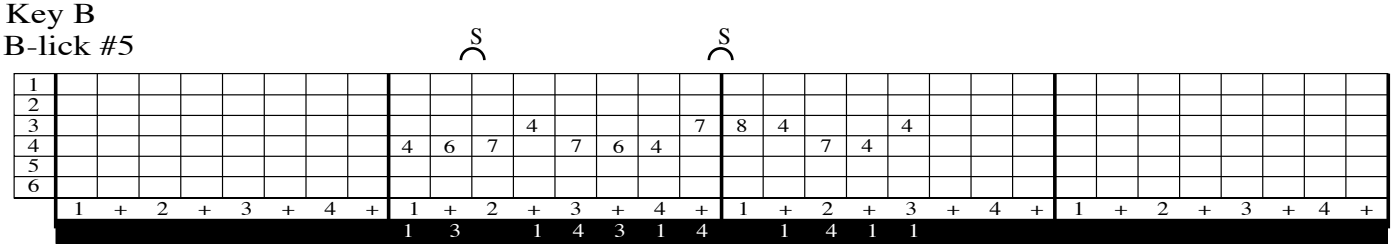
Key B
B-lick #3



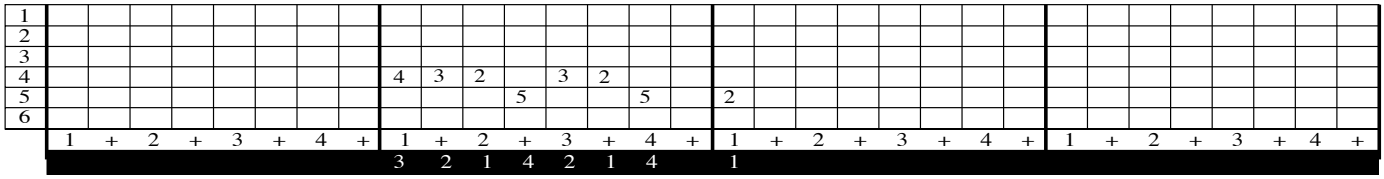
Key B
B-lick #4



Key B
B-lick #5



Key B
B-lick #6



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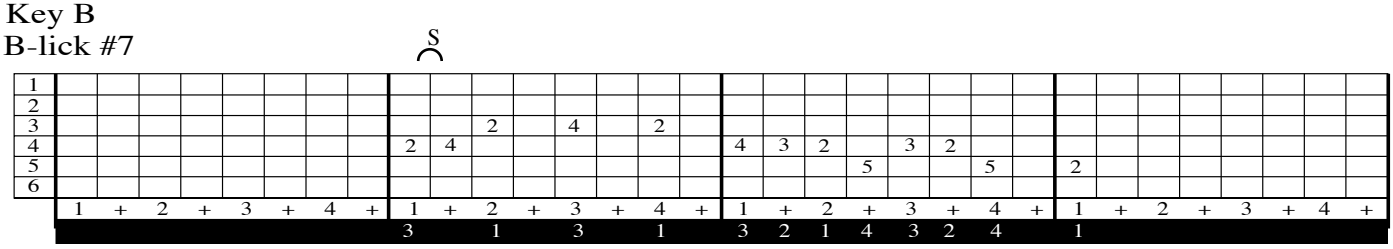
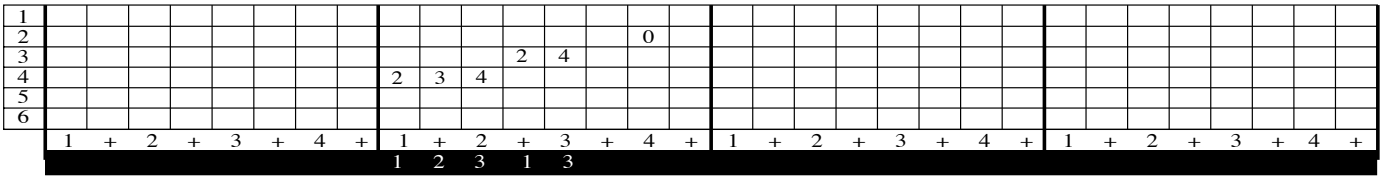
B-lick #7

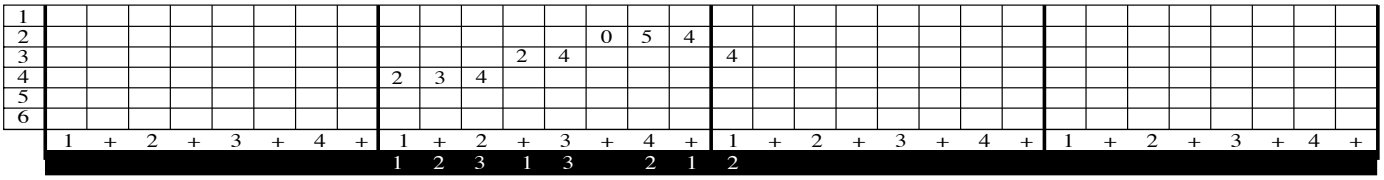


B Licks (con't)

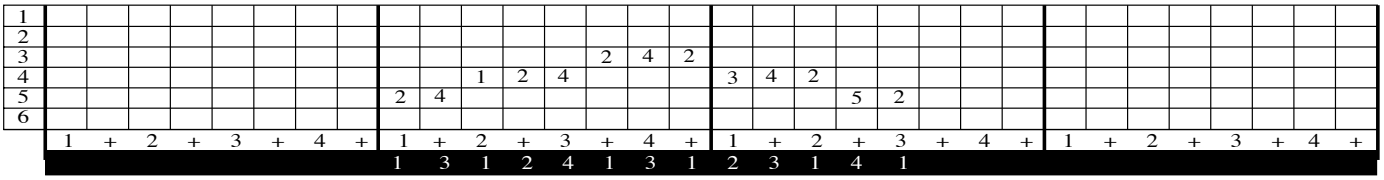
Key B
B-lick #8



Key B
B-lick #9



Key B
B-lick #10



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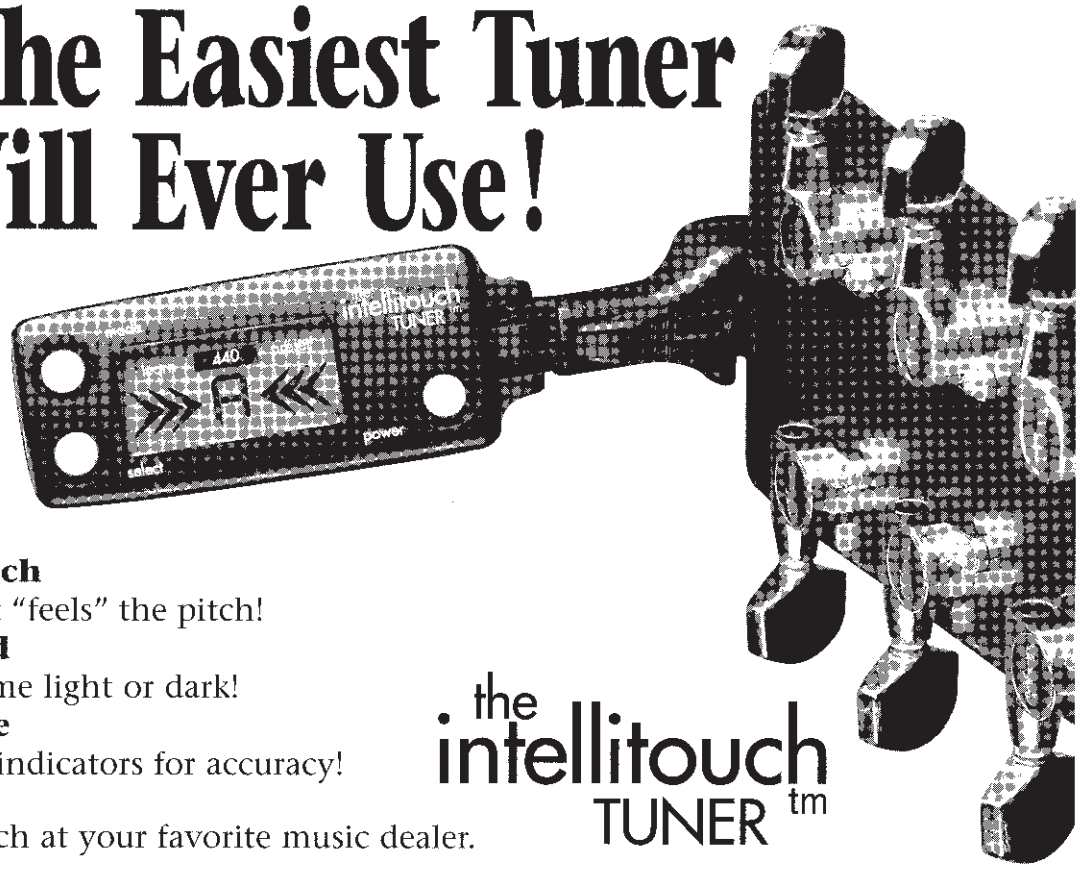

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JAM TUNES

Allen Shadd and "Little Rock Getaway"

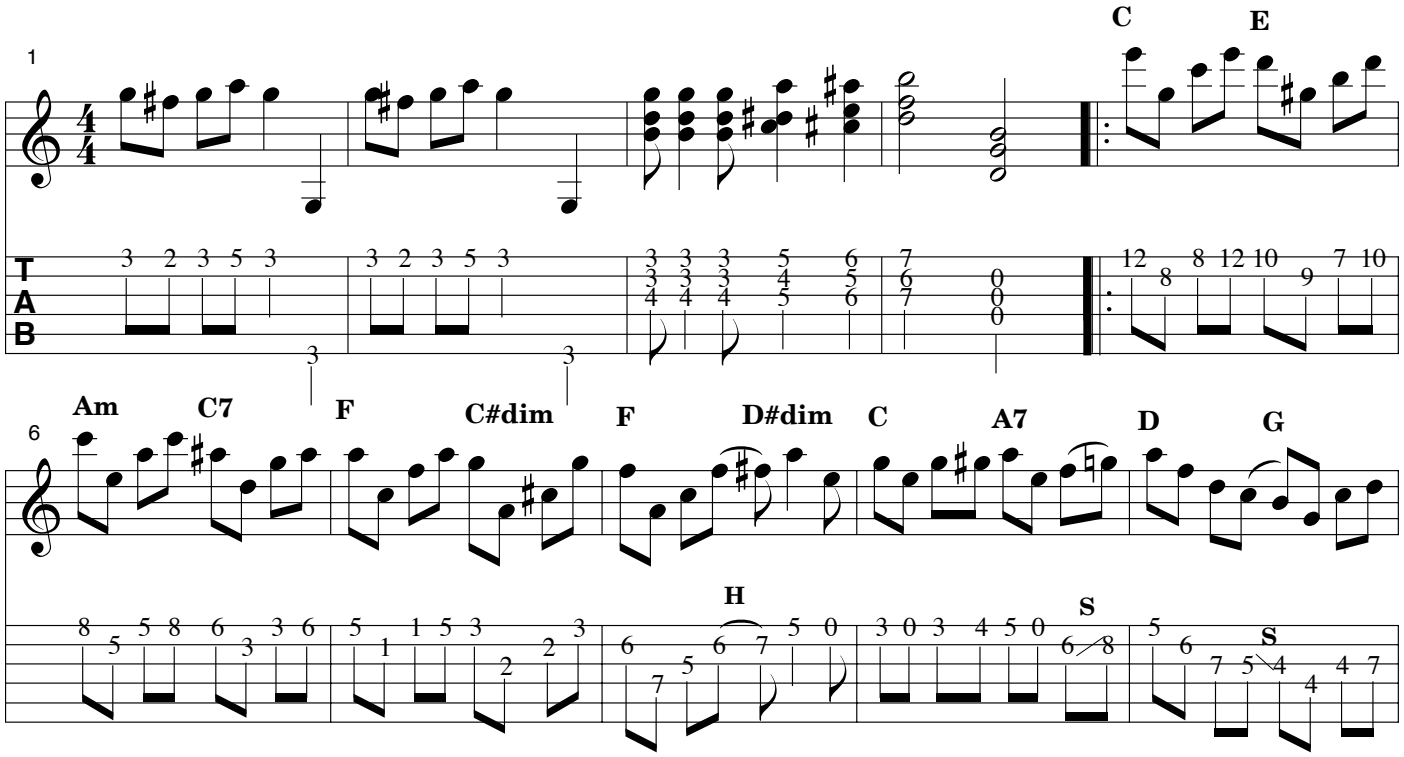
Since Allen Shadd is not as much in the public eye these days as he was back when he was cleaning house in every major flatpicking guitar championship in 1997 and 1998, some folks have been asking what the former National Champ has been doing to occupy his time these days. We caught up with Allen at Steve Kaufman's flatpicking camp this year and asked him that exact question. Allen said that in addition to spending time bass fishing, he has been playing lead guitar with Nancy Moore. Additionally, Allen continues to conduct flatpicking guitar workshops at various locations around the country.

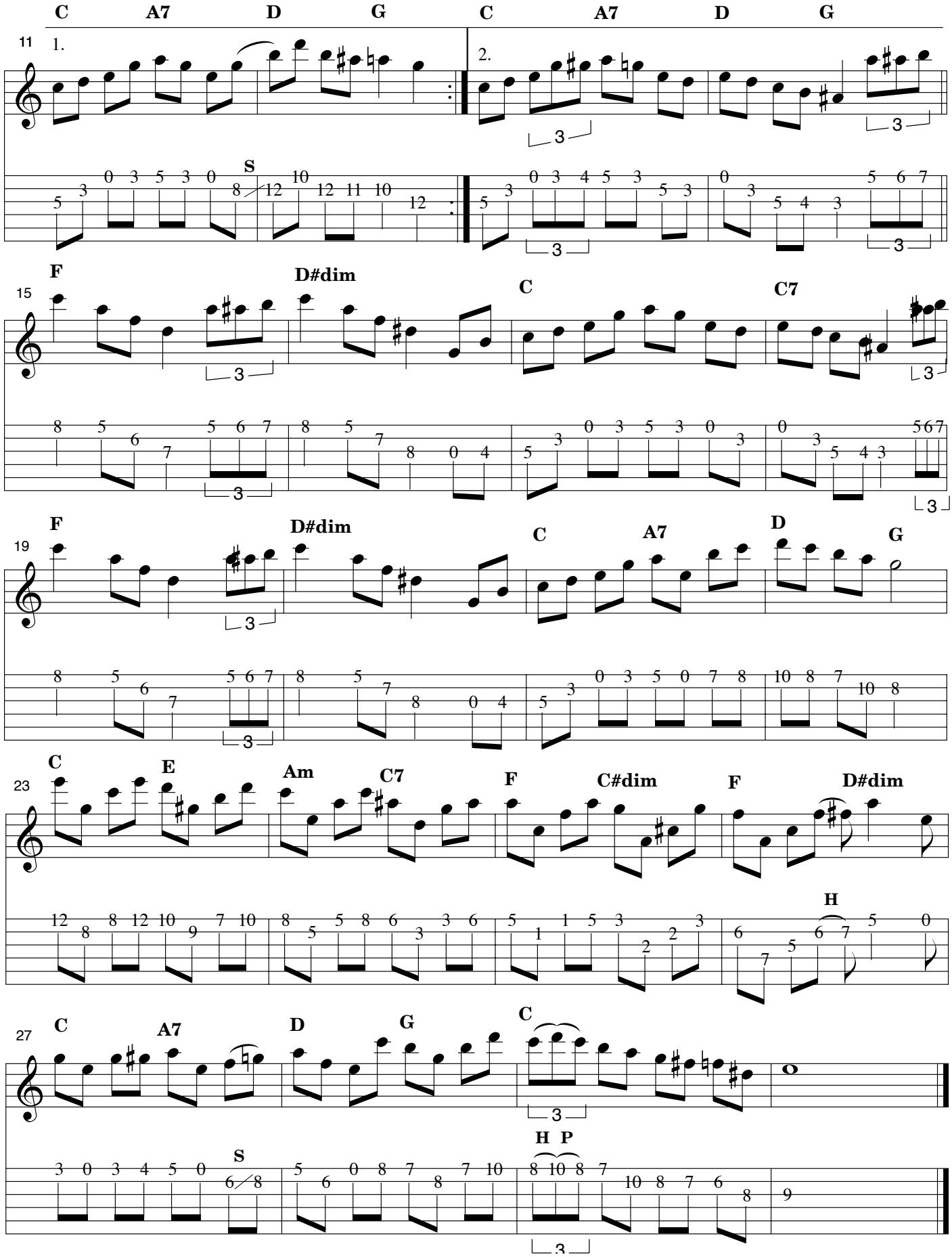
While Allen was involved in contest playing, one of the tunes I always liked to hear him play was "Little Rock Getaway" and so we asked if he would play that tune for us on the *Flatpicking Guitar Magazine* audio as our "Jam Tune" for this issue. Allen was happy to cooperate and gave us a great arrangement of this jam session favorite.

Enjoy picking "Little Rock Getaway!"

Little Rock Getaway

Arranged by Allen Shadd
Transcribed by Brad Davis



Little Rock Getaway (con't)

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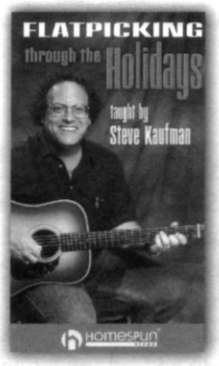

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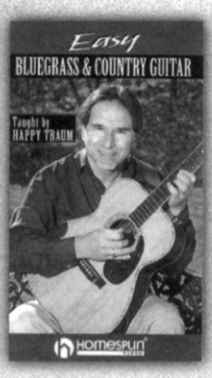

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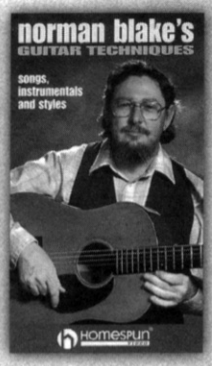

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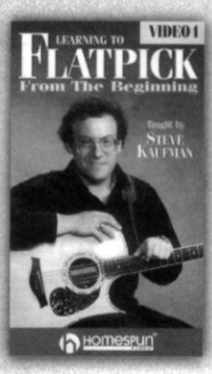

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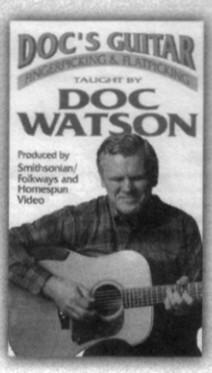

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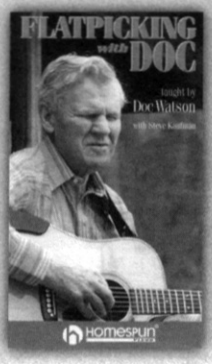

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THE O-ZONE

by Orrin Star

Fire On the Mountain

This rousing old-time tune is usually fiddled faster than most flatpickers can flatpick. But it has an infectious melody; works well on guitar in its native key of A; and, hey, what's a few beats-per-minute among friends anyway?

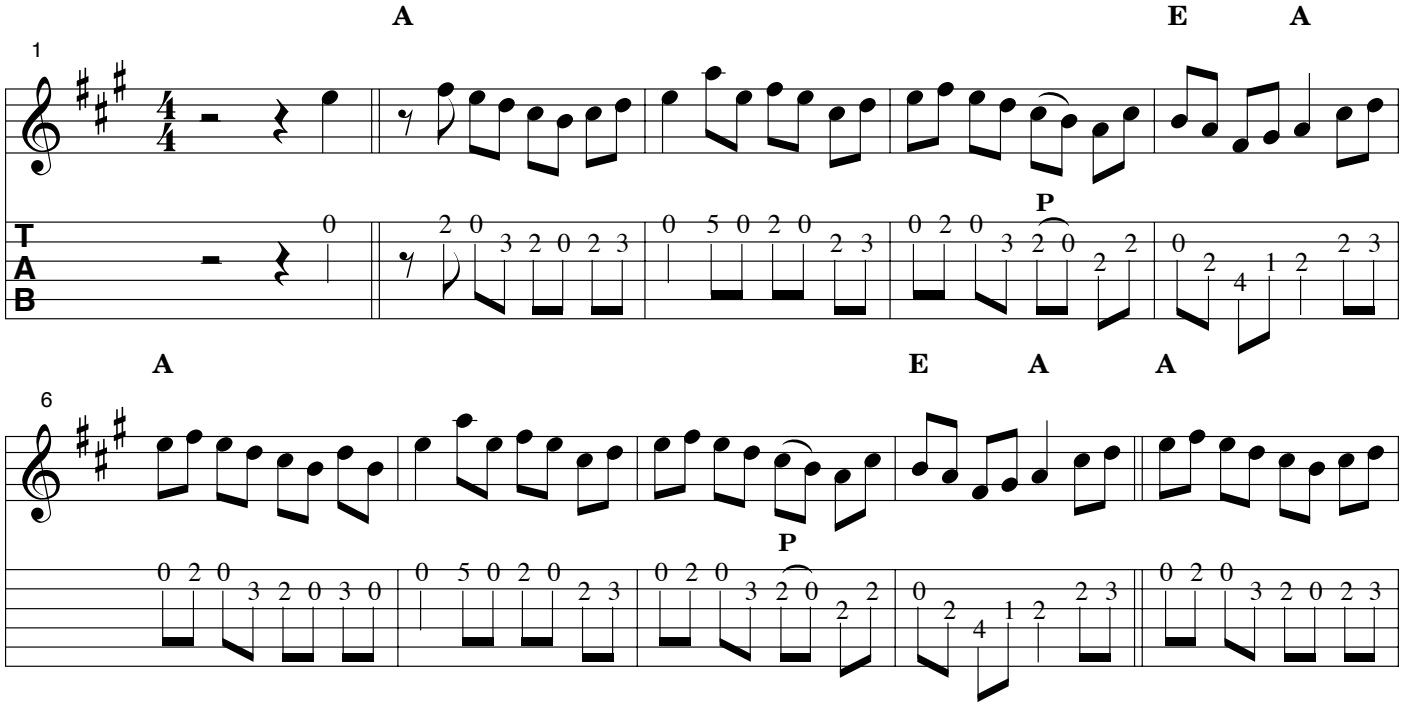
I recall playing it years ago (it's not exactly a tune that one forgets). But when it recently came to mind again I decided to review Tex Logan's version on the Bill Monroe CD *Off the Record, Vol. 1, Live Recordings 1956-1969* (Smithsonian/Folkways) as a reference.

And I learned something cool: while many who play this tune use exactly the same melody for both the A and D sections, Tex varies it. (And it is exactly these interesting yet subtle variations that really rings my bell.)

So here is my guitar treatment of Tex Logan's "Fire On the Mountain" followed by the 'Star variations.' Note that the pinky is frequently relied on, and that hammer-ons and pull-offs are are used as they should be—to add character and personality.

Fire On The Mountain

Arranged by Orrin Star



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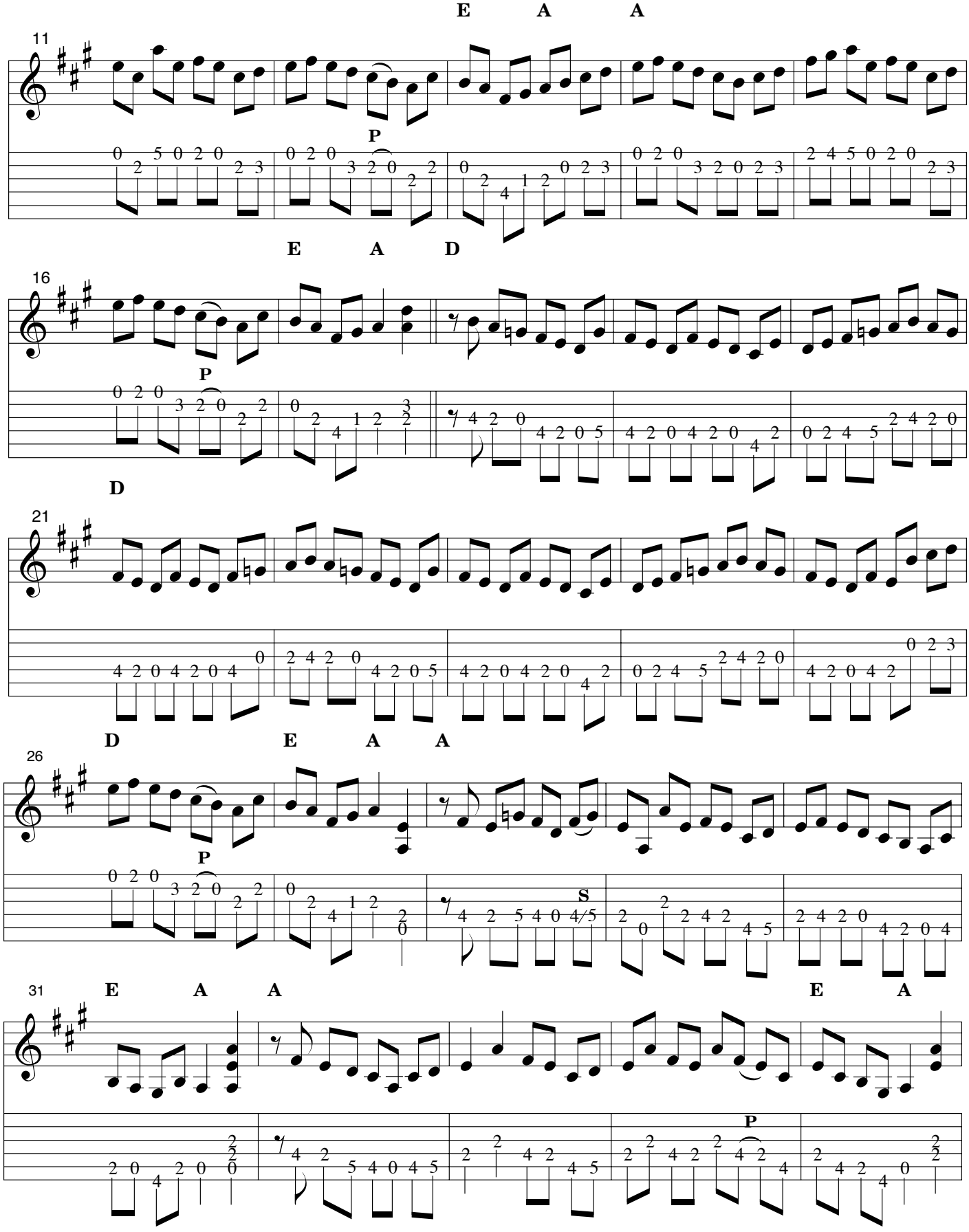
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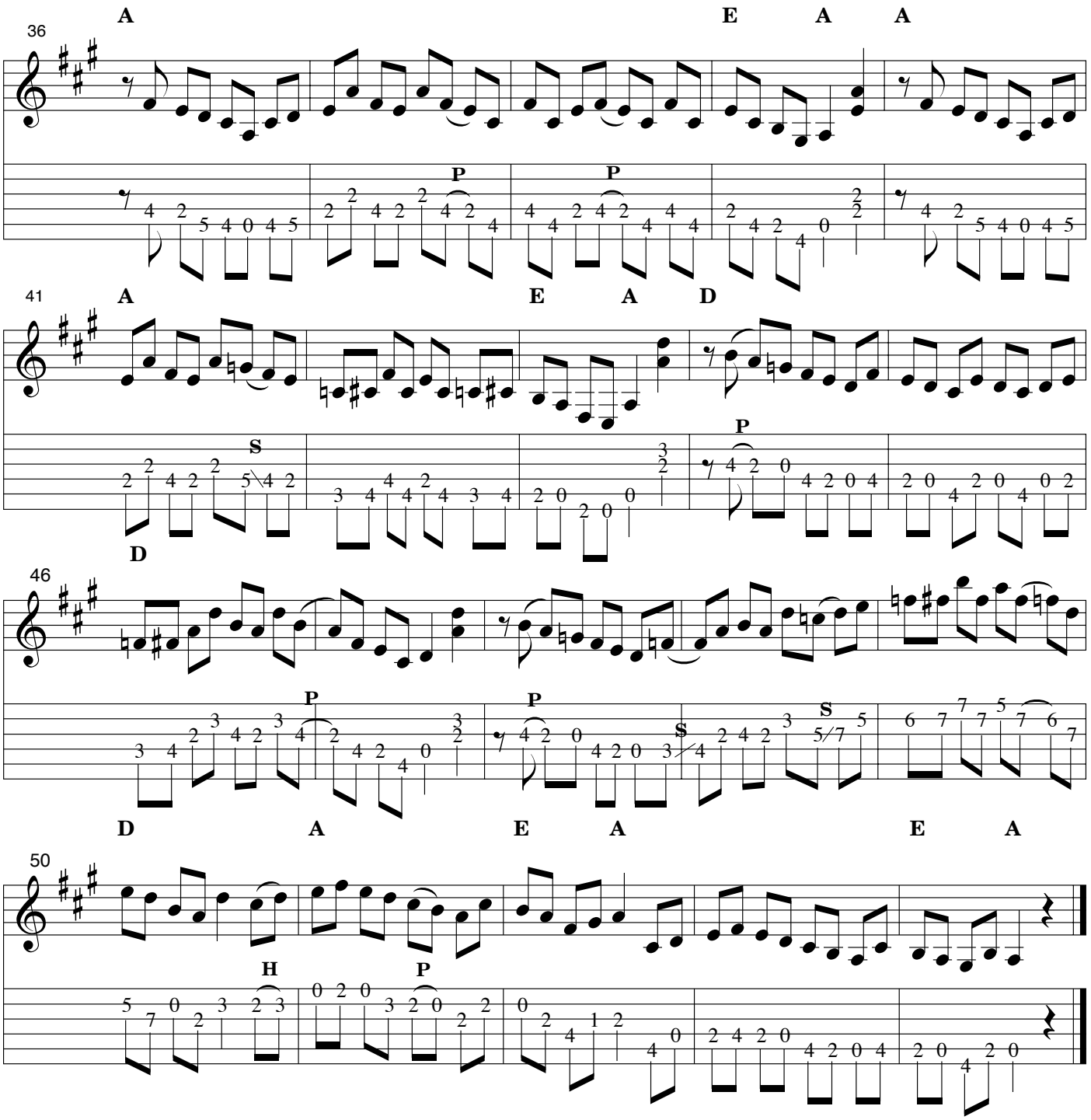
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"Storms Are On The Ocean"/ Alternate Keys

by Dix Bruce

Guitarists, especially flatpickers, love the keys of G and C. For good reason: a whole lot of music, both rhythm and lead, is easily reachable from the positions that those keys and chords offer. One couldn't imagine a bluegrass guitar part without a Lester Flatt G run once in a while or any number of styles without the basic "bass-note / strum" backup technique that's such an important building block in folk, country, old time, and bluegrass. Most fundamental flatpicking leads, beginning with the style of Maybelle Carter and progressing on through more modern players like Doc Watson, Clarence White, and Tony Rice, make great use of these rudimentary chords, keys and positions.

But like anything else in life, too much of a good thing can land you in a rut. If you stay in G and C, you'll only know how to play in G and C. While there's nothing wrong with those keys, by ignoring other keys and positions you miss out on the many interesting tones, timbres, and licks that they have to offer. It's also good to shake yourself up once in a while and force yourself to re-think how you might play something familiar in an unfamiliar position. No doubt you will discover new melodies and licks that would only occur to you in new regions of the fretboard.

In this issue we'll look at a beautiful old Carter Family standard, "Storms Are On the Ocean" and place it in the somewhat unusual key of E. If you're not used to playing leads out of E, it will be a challenge as you fumble around searching for the simplest melodic fragments and licks, which may be automatic to you in G or C. This always torments my students but most of them learn to love the new sounds and different fingering possibilities.

"The Storms Are On the Ocean" was recorded by the Carter Family in 1928 and you can hear it on *Anchored in Love* (Rounder CD 1064). The Carters perform it in the key of B, probably with Maybelle dropping her overall tuning by 1/2 step and playing out of C position. I recorded it on the accompanying *Flatpicking Guitar Magazine* CD as written below in the key of E.

I wrote this arrangement for my new instructional video *Basic Country Flatpicking Guitar* (Stefan Grossman's Guitar Workshop GW 308) to illustrate what we're discussing and to encourage students experiment in keys other than G and C.

Your fretting fingers will have some challenging stretches: the first in the pickup measure where you'll have to reach the fourth fret of the sixth string with your pinkie. In measure two (M 3) you'll need to make the A chord as shown below. The trick is to fret the second, third and fourth strings with your flattened-out first finger while holding the fifth string melody note with your third finger. Chances are you'll get a buzz on the first string. If you find it impossible to get string one ring clearly, just mute it with your first finger.

Be sure to hold the chords designated in the music as you play the melody notes. If you don't, the melody notes will be much harder to reach. And, holding the basic shape of the accompaniment chords will make it much easier to integrate the melody notes with the strums. You may find that you'll need to adjust your grip on a chord as you reach for notes; just don't drop it altogether. If you find it impossible to reach most of the melody notes, capo up a few frets and try again.

In M 4 you'll find a bluesy string bend. As marked in the music, I suggest that you use your third finger. Fret and pick the string and then, while holding it with your fretting finger, push and bend it, moving your finger in the direction of the other five strings. It'll be a little awkward at first but eventually you'll coordinate just the right amount of pressure and movement to produce a cool effect.

"The Storms Are On the Ocean" is a bit unusual in that it has a thirty-two measure "verse plus chorus" form, and the solo is over the whole form. In this style of traditional music, one would more likely solo over one sixteen measure part or the other. While the form is long, the good news is that it is very repetitive and you won't have to memorize all thirty two measures. Let's look more closely at the form.

The first two lines, M 2-9, repeat almost exactly in the second two lines, M 10-17. In M 18 the chorus begins and from M 18-25 you'll find new melodic and harmonic content. M 26-29 has more new material, but it's similar to what you've already had, even down to the string bend in M 28. M 30-33 are primarily a repeat of M 6-10.

I'm a firm believer in singing. No matter how bad you might think your voice sounds, chances are it's not nearly as bad as you think. Singing a song generally helps you learn it faster. It's great fun and the lyrics can make it more meaningful for you. So, lift up your voice on "The Storms Are On the Ocean."

Dix Bruce's two latest instructional videos *Basic Country Flatpicking Guitar* and *Basic Swing Guitar* are available for $24.95 each plus $3.20 postage from Musix, PO Box 231005, Pleasant Hill, CA 94523. e-mail: musix1@aol.com Order toll free (Visa and Master Card) 9:00 AM to 5:00 PM Pacific time, Monday through Friday 1-877-219-0441. *Basic Country Flatpicking Guitar* teaches leads on "Worried Man Blues," "Lonesome Valley," "Bury Me Beneath the Willow," "Storms are on the Ocean," "Handsome Molly," "Wildwood Flower," "Redwing," "John Hardy," and "Jimmie Brown the Newsboy." *Basic Swing Guitar* teaches the songs "Lady Be Good," "Take Me Back to Tulsa," "Minor Swing," "Careless Love," "Sweet Georgia Brown," "Honeysuckle Rose," "Blues in Bb #1," "Blues in Bb #2," "Rose Room," "I Got Rhythm." Dix's *Back Up Trax: Swing & Jazz* book / CD set is also available for learning chords and leads in the swing / jazz style. His newest book *Guide to Capo, Transposing & The Nashville Numbering System* is a lighthearted look at music theory specifically written for guitarists. It starts at the beginning and explains why capos work and how to read and write Nashville Numbering System charts on everything from simple folk songs to more involved jazz tunes. ($5.95 plus $1.00 postage.)

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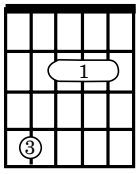
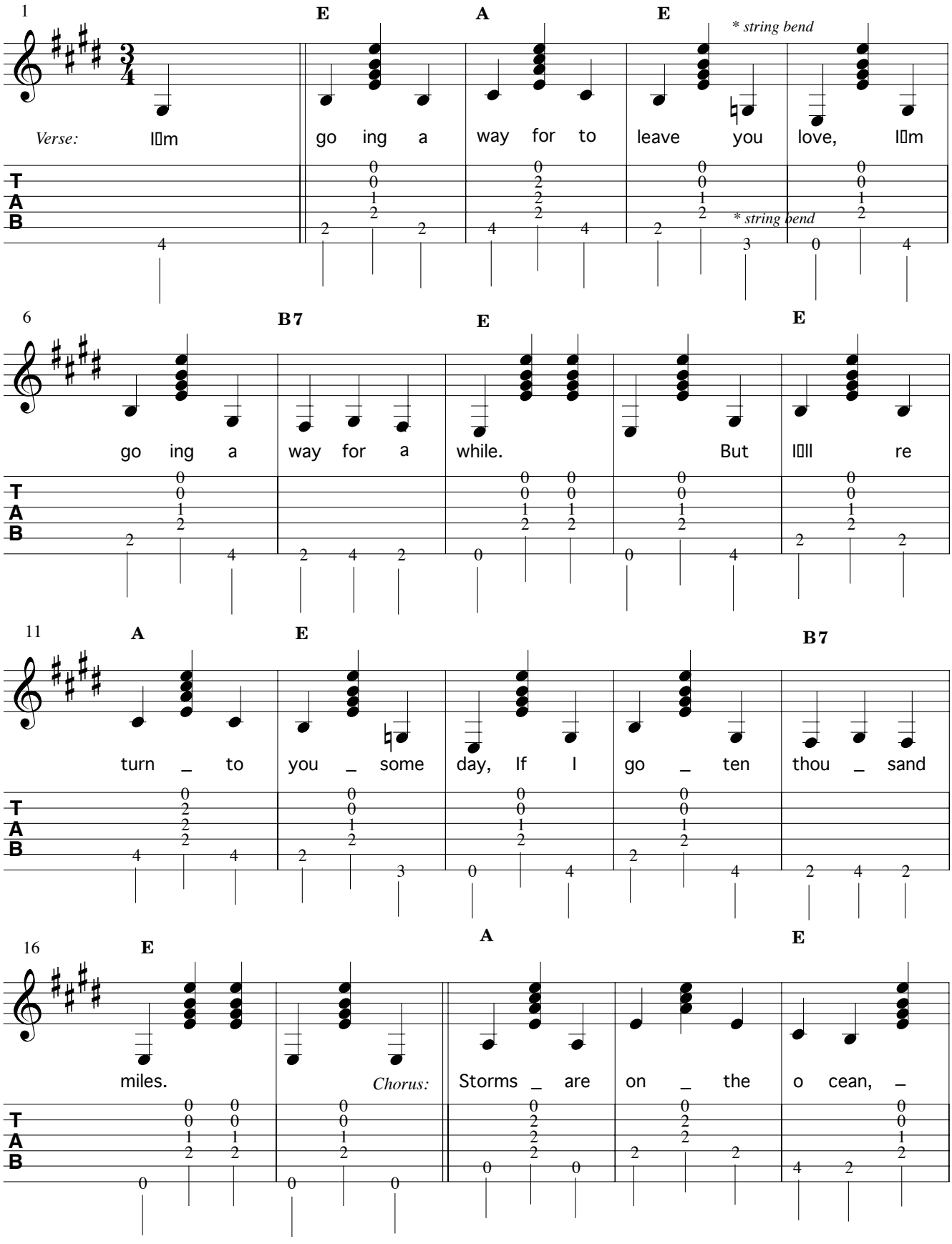


Storms Are On The Ocean

Arranged by Dix Bruce

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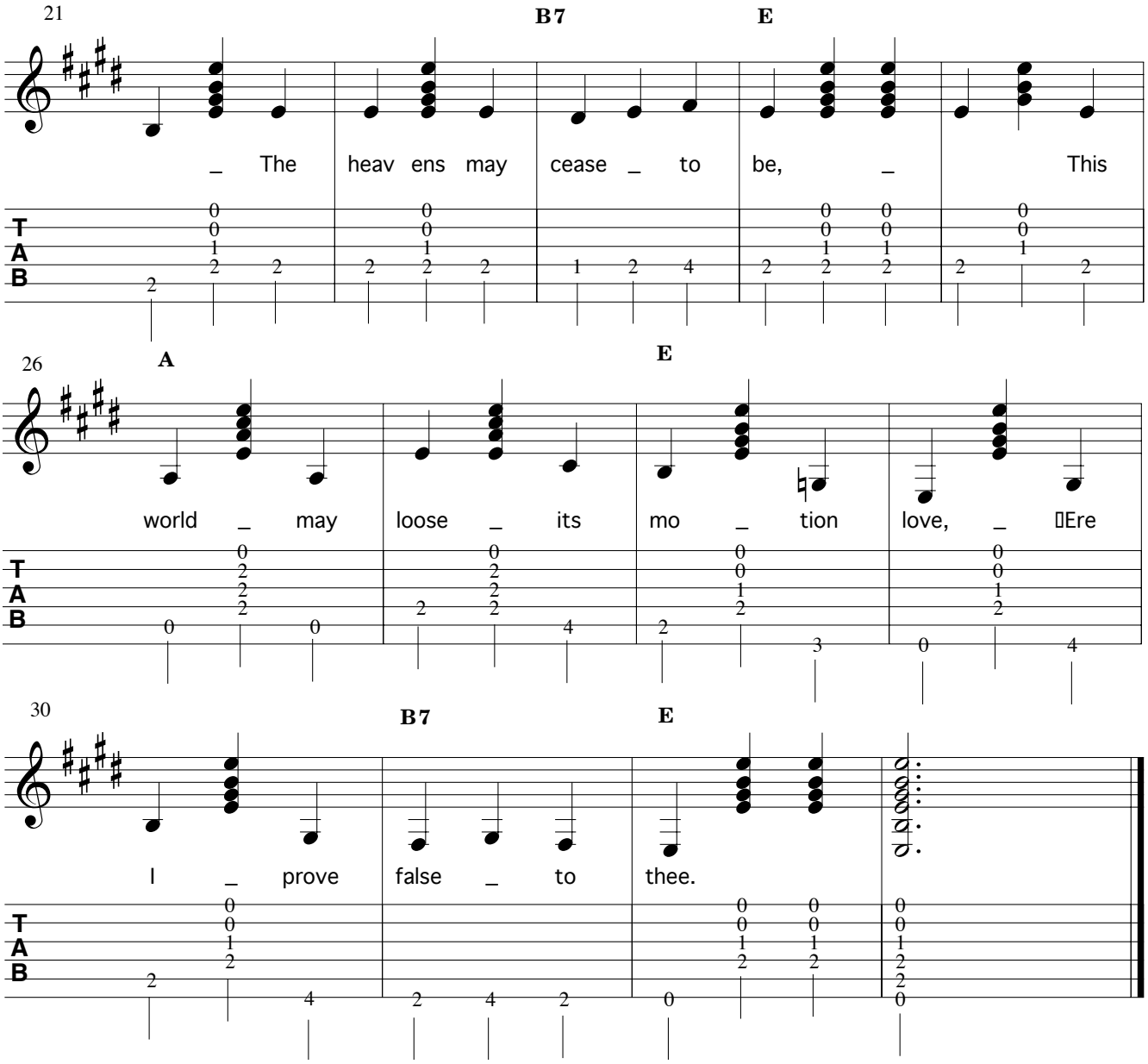

"Storms are on the Ocean" additional lyrics:

Verse 2:
Oh who will dress your pretty little feet,
Oh who will glove your hand,
Oh who will kiss your rosy red cheeks,
When I'm in a far off land?

Verse 3:
Oh Papa will dress my pretty little feet,
Then Mama will glove my hand,
You can kiss my rosy red cheeks,
When you return again.

Verse 4:
Oh have you seen those mournful doves,
Flying from pine to pine,
A-mourning for their own true love,
Just like I mourn for mine.

Verse 5:
I'll never go back on the ocean love,
I'll never go back on the sea.
I'll never go back on the blue eyed girl,
'Til she goes back on me.

Winfield, Contests & Me: Reflections of a Flatpicking Champ

by Orrin Star

Editor's Note: Winfield and flatpicking: the two are practically synonymous. And this is hardly coincidental when you consider that flatpicking, like fiddling, on which it is based, is a style which readily lends itself to virtuoso displays. But is this gravitation towards contests and competition a good thing?

Orrin Star weighed in on a many of the issues surrounding contests in a wide-ranging essay he wrote for a college writing class not long after his 1976 Winfield win. Four years ago it ran in Bluegrass Unlimited *(Jan '97). But it is as relevant today as it was then—and a natural fit for this magazine. So we are happy to present this newly-revised version.*

Contests are funny things. Few other events arouse such a spectrum of emotions among musicians: excitement, fear, jealousy, joy, self-doubt, anger, embarassment, elation, humiliation. You see them all at any contest. And though the purpose of a picking contest would seem to be relatively benign—to recognize talent while providing entertainment—the number of negative emotions they arouse highlights the fact that they are often hard on the participants.

Competing in a music contest is like taking a final exam in which only one person can get an "A"—and in public. Defeat is the norm. I know several fine musicians who have entered one contest, lost, and then declared that they would never put themselves through THAT again.

And yet contests have proven to be popular and enduring; the impulse to try to identify and to reward excellence is a deeply rooted one (and occurs in all areas of the arts).

Hence the love-hate relationship between musicians and these special events held to judge them—one that I am no stranger to myself.

The first contest I ever entered was in the fall of 1974. Billed as an "acoustic guitar convention," it was held on a ski slope in New Hampshire, and drew sixty entrants, playing everything from classical to blues. I was at a rambunctious intermediate stage in my playing at the time; I thought I was somewhat further along as a player than I actually was. My entry was a flashy original fiddle tune. And I left before the marathon event had ended (assuming, correctly, that I hadn't placed).

The following summer I was back in New Hampshire at a bluegrass festival that featured some contests. I came with a bluegrass band I'd recently joined and was feeling much stronger as a player. I entered the guitar contest with high hopes; only one other guy appeared to be a contender. The judges awarded him first place.

I recall feeling sad and disappointed that I'd placed second, and not at all sure why (though I hadn't listened closely to my rival's performance). Several people came up to me and told me that I should have won. It was also suggested that contests politics may have played a role: though our band had placed first in the band contest, every individual in the group had placed second in their respective events (guitar, banjo and fiddle). Perhaps the judges didn't want all the top prizes to go to just one group?

Ah, the fine art of contest analysis.

Judging is at the heart of a music contest. Unlike the obvious outcomes of most athletic events, music competitions require judges to determine who wins. Differences of opinion are inevitable. And debating the judge's decisions is a cottage industry that convenes whenever contests are held.

Contest results are easier to accept if the judging appeared to be fair. But if the judging seemed inept or biased then the sting of defeat is made sharper by the bite of injustice. Ouch! (At the same time, it's also easier to slam the judges than to admit that somebody else may have outplayed you, especially when it's a close call).

Like people, contests each have their own personalities, characters and flaws. I can't say I thought well of them until I started winning some.

I don't recall when I first heard about Winfield. I know that the idea of going had been in my mind for a few years before I actually went. But prior to 1976 I wasn't confident that I was ready (and Kansas was a long way away). A couple things happened that summer which convinced me that the time to go had come.

First, I worked with Bill Keith. Because my summer job was in Woodstock, NY—and he happened to live there and be around that summer—our paths crossed. I did a big concert in New York City with him and also had my first studio recording experience (with a French folk/rock singer). Having been bandless for a couple months and down in the dumps musically at the start of the summer, working with him gave me a real boost.

Second, I won some contests. That summer the sponsors of the annual library fair in Woodstock decided to add a music contest. One award was "Best Instrumentalist." I flatpicked a few fiddle tunes—and won. It was exciting; my first "first." Several weeks later I went to Smokey Greene's festival further upstate and took first in guitar and second in mandolin. Good omens if I was going to try my luck at Winfield (and not to mention some decent prize money.) (Someone there told that I might have taken first in mandolin contest as well but the judges didn't want to give both top prizes to one player...)

So, playing with Keith and winning some contests primed me for Kansas. As the summer ended I began to prepare for the contest in earnest.

My preparations were both practical and mental.

The practical began with selecting the four tunes that I needed to have ready to play. (Contestants at Winfield play two songs in the preliminary round, then two more if they are called back for the finals.) A list of the judging criteria was contained in the registration materials:

1. Selection of material
2. Difficulty of material
3. Execution of material
4. Tuning
5. Arrangment of material
6. Overall impression

"Selection of material"* to me meant that I should try and steer clear of tunes which were already flatpicking standards. I thus chose "Old Joe Clark," "Rickett's Hornpipe," "Katy Hill," and "Beaumont Rag" (all fresh flatpicking fare except for 'Beaumont').

Having chosen my four tunes, I practiced them daily and systematically for the month

preceding the event. Even though it was a rare day that I didn't play my guitar, rehearsing on a daily basis (like classical musicians do) was a new experience for me. I could feel my grasp of the tunes improving as the month progressed.

When I learned that one of my better guitar students (Bob Mitchell) also wanted to attend the festival, I enlisted him as my accompanist. He and I rehearsed weekly. (I also arranged for a local club to let us get up on stage and play our four tunes during a band's break. Though I was used to playing for an audience, Bob was not; I thought it made sense for his playing-in-public debut to be at a small local club rather than on the main stage at Winfield.)

In my mind there was a distinct pecking order to my four tunes. "Katy Hill" was definitely the hottest. "Rickett's" the mellowest. And "Beaumont" and "Old Joe" were in the middle. Since the judges keep a running tally of your scores (i.e., your final score is the sum of each of your four scores), I decided to play my "middle" tunes in the preliminaries and 'Rickett's and 'Katy' in the finals; I wanted to save my best for last but also try and ensure that I made the finals.

My game plan called for one capo change: from the fourth fret to the second fret (between "Rickett's" and "Katy Hill"). I was concerned about the re-tuning that most capo changes require. After some experimenting I found that if I capoed at the second fret, got perfectly in tune, and then gently placed a second capo on the fourth fret, I could make the change quickly and without harming my tuning simply by removing the top capo.

The mental preparation for the contest was more complex.

We value competition in our society. But we also value humility. And there is a real tension between the two. This tension isn't obvious most of the time since what and how we think about ourselves is normally not for public consumption. I went to the National Flatpicking Championship because I thought I was good and might win. But I wasn't exactly prepared to say so in public. And yet, as I discovered, simply mentioning that I was going to Winfield was just like saying exactly that. "Really? You thing you're that good?" Gulp.

I chuckle now at some of the rationalizations I came up with to try and explain why I was going. That—a 14-year old had won it the previous year, and if some kid (Mark O'Connor) could do it so could I—nothing was happening for me musically that fall and so I might as well enter since that was something—1976 was an Olympic year and, hey, if you could be in the Olympics in your field, then why not? Never simply "because I think I can win."

At it's worst this conflict between public humility and private ambition would hit me in the form of a question (which I was actually asked in taunting fashion by moody fellow flatpicker): what was I trying to prove? Not the best thing to have on your mind before a major competition.

Fortunately, a good week before I left for Kansas I realized that ambivalence was poisoning my preparation and decided to adopt an actively positive approach; from that point on my reply to those who asked if I thought I could win was a simple "Yup." But it was a struggle.

"This next gentleman came a long way to be with us tonight. From Somerville, Massachusetts, the 1976 National Flatpicking Champion, Mr. Orrin Star." It was a little unreal at first. Intense emotions and sensory overload had given the weekend a dream-like quality: flying in to Wichita; hitchiking to Winfield; rendezvousing with my rhythm man Bob (who had driven there); waking at six a.m. in darkness and practicing at a nearby campfire; going to the stage to draw for order of appearance (I was #38) and recognizing two previous winners; feeling wired on stage and playing VERY fast; called back for the finals; then on to the mandolin contest; finals there too; brief respite then back to the main stage for the mandolin awards (I placed second) and a tune for the audience; up again shortly for the guitar awards. Yow.

Felt good. A real triumph. I recall saying to Bob backstage as we waited for the guitar results that I'd be happy with second. Though I'm grateful that wasn't the case, at the time I truly had no idea how I'd finish. I'd spent a good part of the day thoroughly freaked out because near the start of "Beaumont Rag" I'd made a slight tempo change (which turned out to be inconsequential) that shocked me to the core; coming off stage felt like like I'd hit a small animal on the highway; I thought I'd blown it. When I was called back for the finals I was somewhat mollified. But the shock never left me entirely that day.

It was only a while after the event that I realized perhaps the most important consequence of winning Winfield—the boon to one's career that such a credential can provide. It's not like the phone starts ringing off the hook. But it does put a stamp of approval on your talent and gives you some instant credibility. Contests certainly do offer good avenues of recognition for up-and-coming players.

They offer other things as well. First, the opportunity to perform in front of an audience (something especially valuable for players who are not in groups or are between bands, as I was at the time). They also beckon prospective contestants to work hard and refine their playing. And they do provide entertainment.

But they are not without their problems. As noted earlier, the tension of competition itself, the rejection of defeat, and occasions of poor judging have soured many to contest experience. Perfectly understandable: who likes being judged and losing?

At the same, I do take issue with those who object to contests on the grounds that it is inherently unfair or even not possible to judge something as subjective as music. Phooey! We judge music and musicians all the time in our heads; our brains are programmed to order and discriminate what we see and hear. And there are objective criteria by which we distinguish who is great on a given instrument—taste, touch, timing, drive, originality, personality. Though opinions about these qualities are bound to differ, the facts of their existence and appropriateness is not (I humbly submit).

But let's be clear about exactly what we're talking about here. If someone claims that Player X is the "best fiddler on the planet,"that would probably be grounds for a spirited argument—since it is a global and grandiose judgment. In this instance I would probably side with the comparisons-are-futile people. But this is an ultimate judgment, over time—something that the music contest never really claims to make.

One of the unappreciated aspects of music contests is the actual modesty of the results. Speaking musician to musician now, regardless of the significance which a promoter or society attributes to an event, all that can really be said after a contest is that on a given day these players performed thus in the opinion of the judges.

That's it! A single performance in the life of an artist. Winning can certainly help your career. But losing will never hold you back: good players are recognized and have careers based on their talents and personalities, not on their trophies.

There are certain truths about contests that I take to be self-evident: —Opinions differ. —Doing poorly always hurts. —No one has to enter them. —We shouldn't take them more seriously than they deserve to be taken.

The one footnote:

* More recently Winfield has condensed their judging criteria down to four (Arrangement; Execution & Articulation; Expression, Dynamics & Show Value; and Overall Impression) and added detailed explanations of each. 'Selection of material' is now part of 'Arrangment' and is defined by this pointed question: "Is the arrangment original, for the most part, to the contestant, or is it someone else's known arrangment?"

Music Theory:
Mastering the Fingerboard
Technical Studies for Flatpickers.

by Michel A. Maddux

Exploration in D

If you were to dig out your archive copies of the previous issues of *Flatpicking Guitar Magazine* and pull out the "Mastering the Fingerboard" columns that discussed the key of D, you would find that we have studied range extension, open string or "floaty" scales, and studied first and seventh position D forms. In this study we will examine seven D Major forms with a technical exercise, and complete the study of the key of D Major with a beautiful old time tune, "Over the Waterfall."

Seven D Major Forms

In the exercise the D major scale is played in every position used in the first 12 frets, for a total of seven different forms. I have arranged this study to allow you to practice the individual forms, with connecting notes that show a way to move between them. By the completion of the exercise you will have played all seven forms and shifted from second position to 10th position on the fingerboard.

How to Practice

Each section should be studied individually before you attempt to put it all together. Practice the first scale to the repeat sign, then do the same thing for the next section, and so on. After you have mastered the fingering for each section, practice playing the sections together, and focus on moving smoothly between them.

The position indicated, for example, second position, means the fret that the index finger is to cover. In ninth position, the index finger falls on the ninth fret. Note also that some of these forms require you to stretch the little finger. Don't cheat! Use that little finger.

Always use a metronome when you practice. Observe strict DUDU (down up down up) pick direction. For this exercise, everything is played using DUDU. Get the best possible tone out of every note. Don't rush through this exercise; remember, quality before quantity!

When you have mastered all of the forms and the transitions between them, you should practice moving up and down the fingerboard through all of the positions and scale forms.

The closed forms repeat in every key in the same relative order that they appear here. I want you to demonstrate this to yourself by creating a similar exercise for the keys of C, G, and A, starting in first position.

Notes on the forms

Notes on fourth position D Major: In the second measure of the form, you must shift to fifth position on the B string and shift to 7th position on the E string. Play all three notes of the 10-12-10 sequence with the little finger. Shift back down to fifth position with the index finger, and back to fourth on the G string.

Notes on fifth position D major:

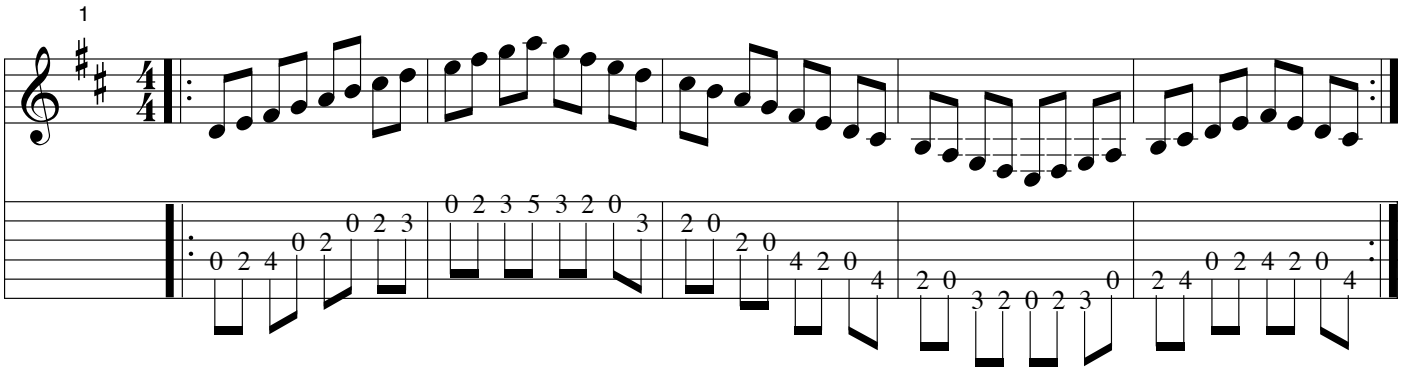
When making the transition from fifth position to the seventh position form, play the last note of the exercise with the index finger to facilitate the hand position change. Prior to that it is played with the middle finger.

That's enough for this time. Have fun and keep on pickin'!

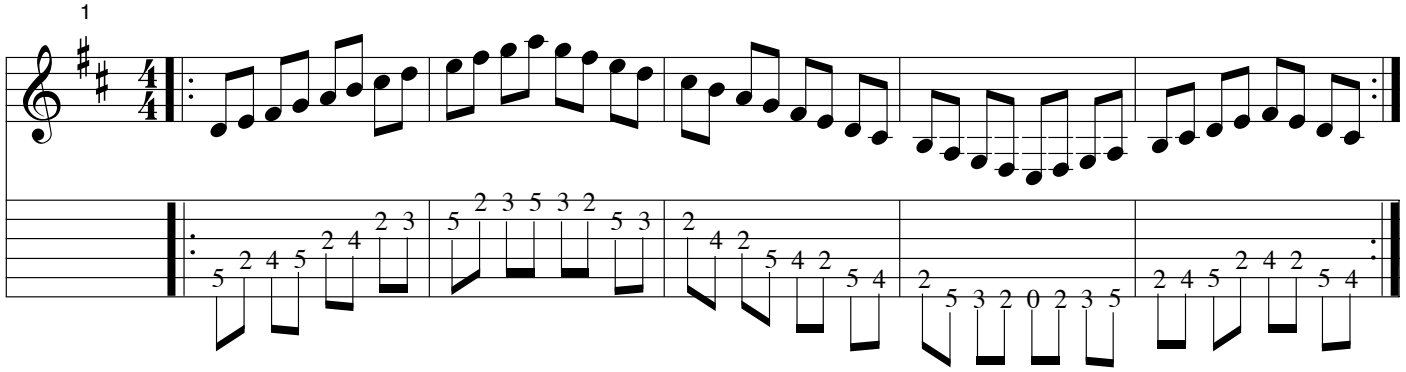
About the Author:

Mike Maddux has been flatpicking since 1981. He performs regularly in Colorado Springs and the western United States with his wife Bertye, and "The Mike and Bertye Maddux Band." Please contact him with questions or comments in care of this magazine.

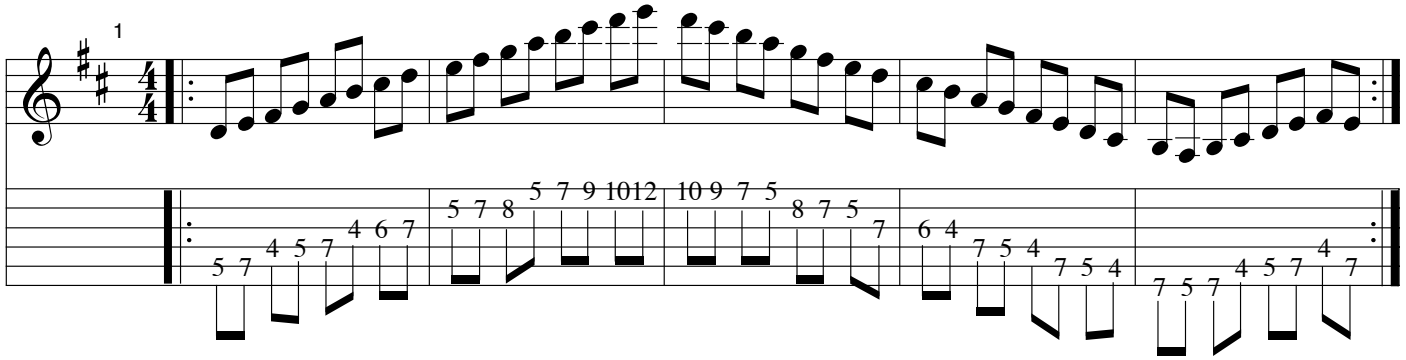
D Major, second position, Open String Form; Repeat 8-16 times without stopping:



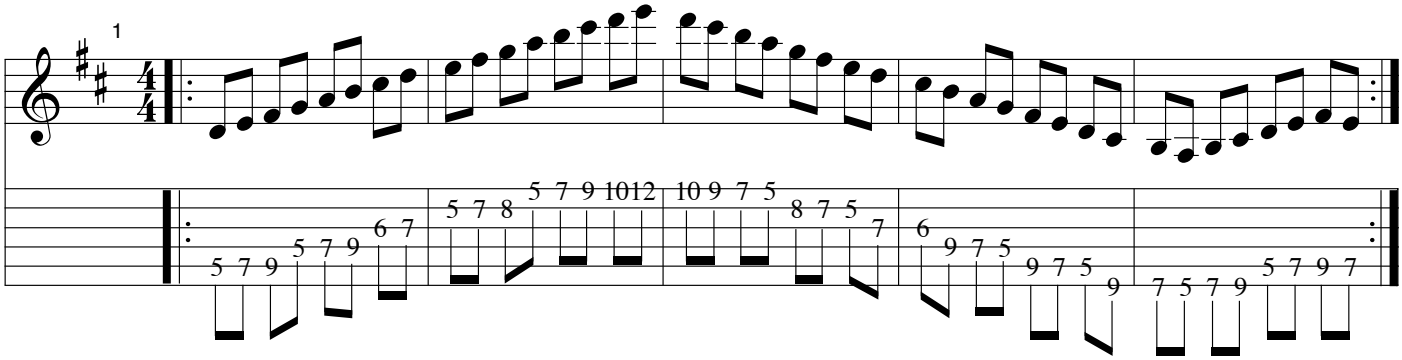
D Major, second position, Closed Form; Repeat 8-16 times without stopping:



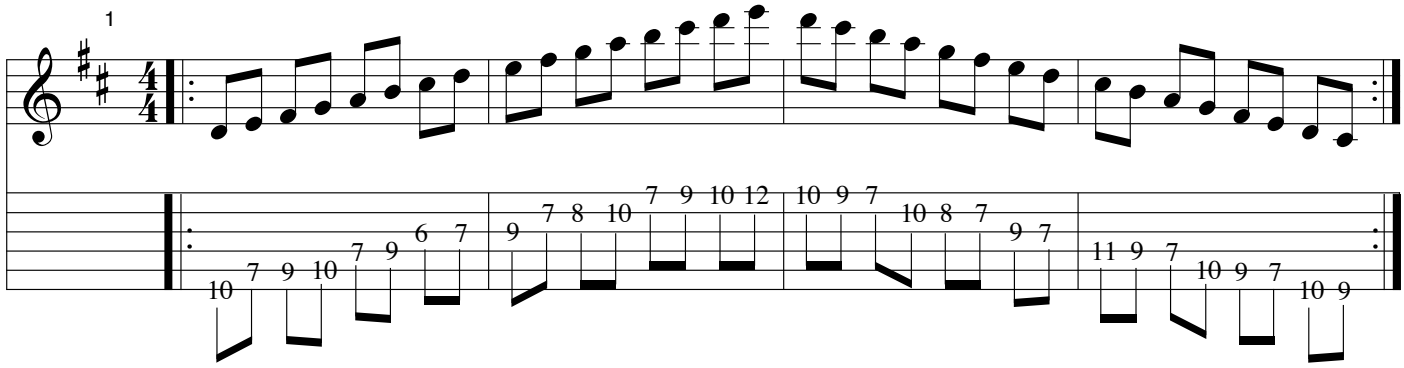
D Major, fourth position. Repeat 8-16 times without stopping:



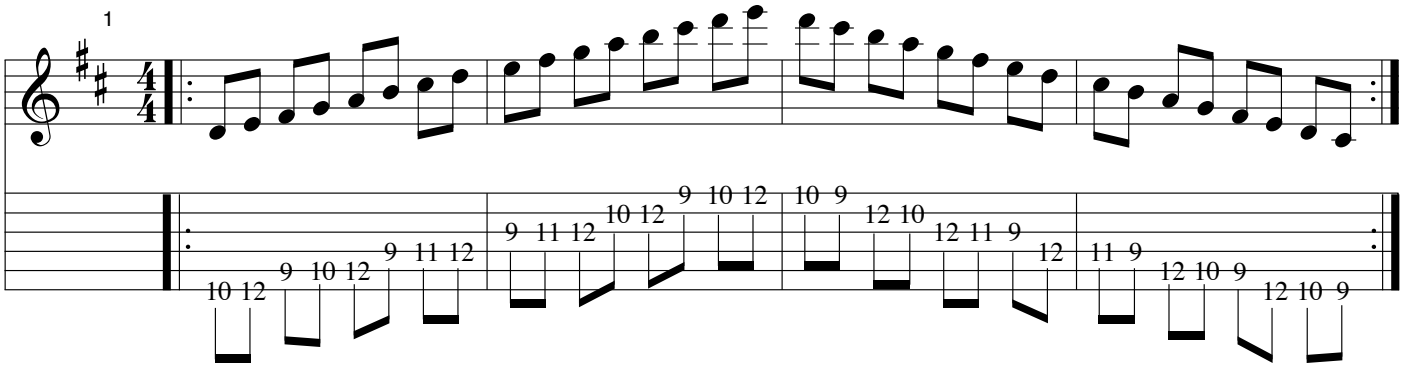
D Major; fifth position. Repeat 8-16 times without stopping:



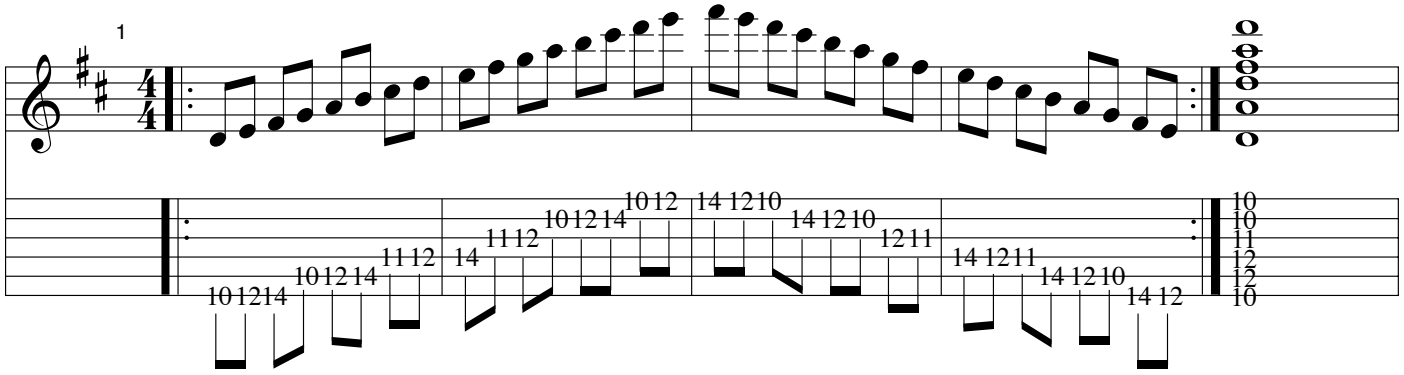
D Major; seventh position. Repeat 8-16 times without stopping:



D major; ninth position. Repeat 8-16 times without stopping:



D major; 10th position. Repeat 8-16 times without stopping:



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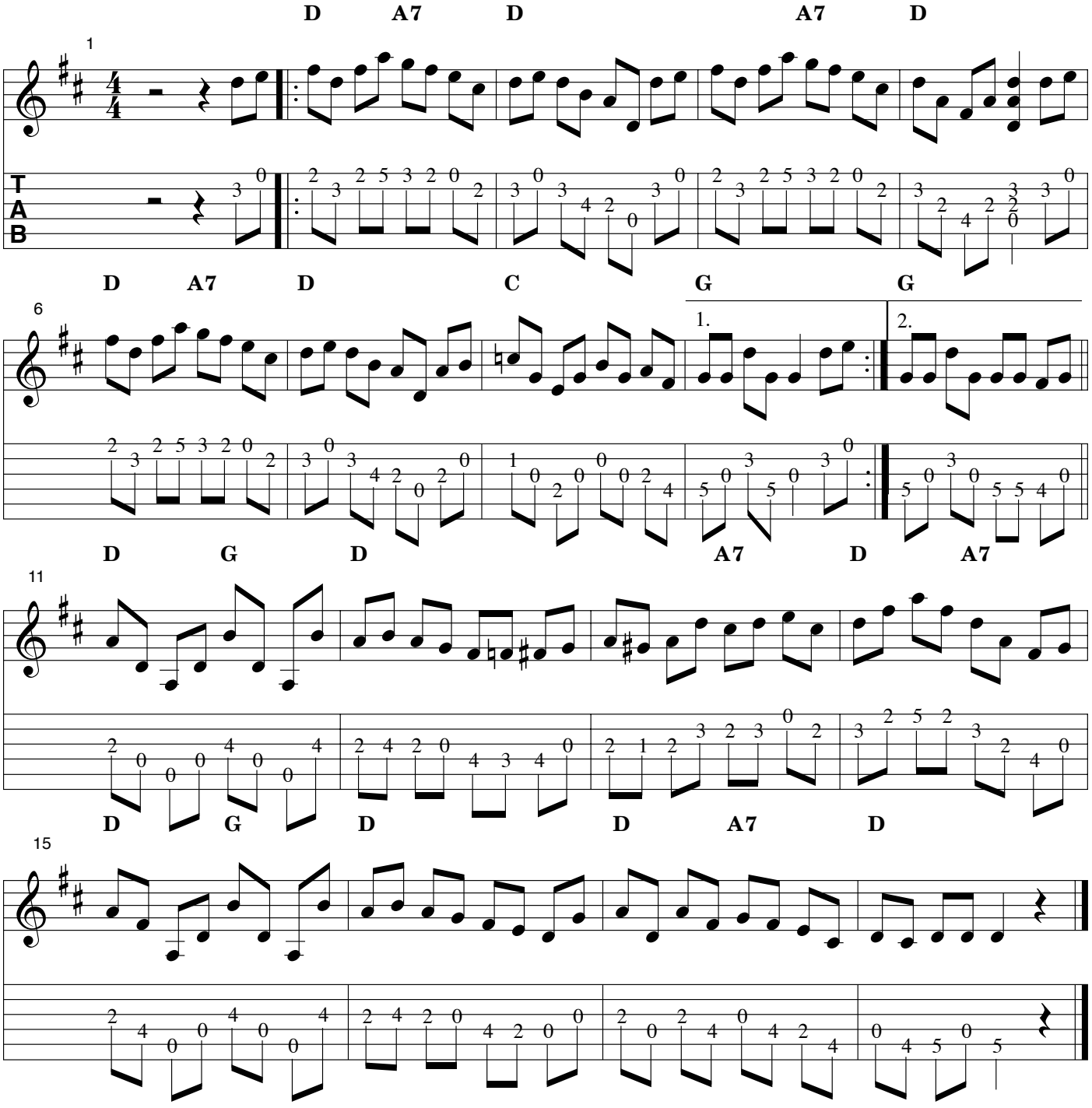
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ANGELS WE HAVE HEARD ON HIGH

Being that this issue takes us right on through the holidays, it seemed fitting to present a traditional, religiously-oriented Christmas piece. It certainly wasn't difficult finding one; on the contrary, it was difficult to choose among so many good ones, particularly when they're all favorites. Among all those favorites, though, "Angels We Have Heard On High" has always been one of my most favorites because it speaks to the joyous occasion of Christ's birth and to His glory, and does so with much verve, energy, and power.

Before getting into any detail about how to play the piece, just a word or two about its structure. The printed music I've come across for "Angels We Have Heard On High" offers little or no information about its origins or author, and I'm not exactly sure of the period from which it comes, except it's back there a ways. Much of the music written 200 or more years ago, though, was based on four chords to the bar, at least for a few of the measures, just like this one.

The various printed versions I've seen, however, are not in total agreement on what those four chords to the bar should be, or for that matter, on other areas in the chord progression. In the spirit of such variation, parts of the arrangement here do not follow a "usual" chord progression either. Actually, though, getting into the spirit isn't the only justification for such changes. The main reason for introducing additional chord variations has to do with playing music usually associated with full orchestra and large choir on just one guitar. What you see here is an attempt to retain some of the song's interest through such variations. As to attempting to retain some of the energy the tune exudes, the usual one-guitar solution of including lots of full strums was invoked.

Consisting of an eight-bar verse broken into two four-bar lines of the same melody, and a twelve-bar refrain (sung in Latin), broken into two six-bar lines of the same melody, it seemed like a good opportunity to present a two-level arrangement. With that in mind, the second four measures of the verse (measures 5 - 8) are more difficult than the first four, whereas the first six measures of the refrain (measures 9 - 14) are easier than the second six (measures 15 - 21). For an easy (or easier) arrangement then, albeit one not quite as interesting as shown, just play measures 1 - 4 twice, and measures 9 - 14 twice.

On the other hand, if you're going to play it as is, a couple of items are in need of elaboration. The first one is the last note of measure 11—the third string 5th fret.

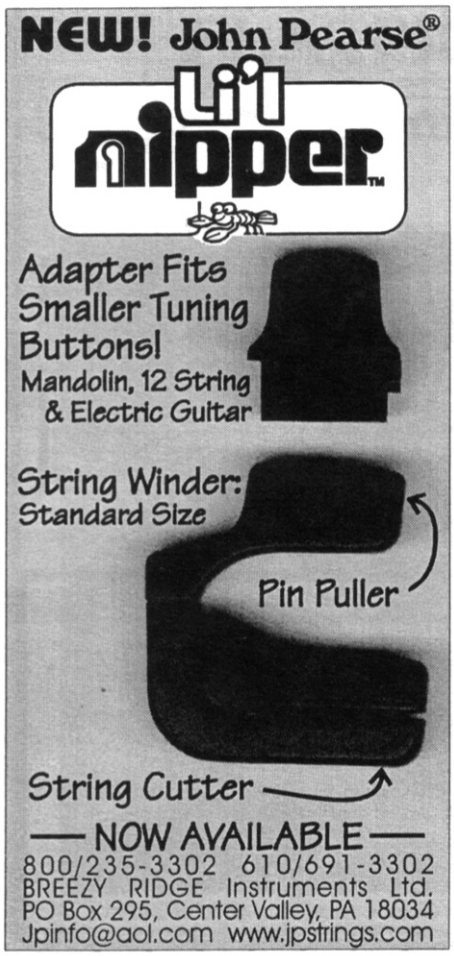
Even though this is in the so-called easy section of the refrain, my pick never seems to be in the right place for that note (these days that seems to be true for a lot of notes). You may not have any problem with it at all, but if you do, try just hammering it with your left-hand little finger hard enough to hear it without having to pick it with your right hand. That usually works for me. The same note, also the last note of the measure, and with the same solution, occurs again in measure 17.

The next item is a collective one having to do with the second half of the refrain; measures 15, 16, and 17. All three measures contain multiple hammers from open to second and third frets. These are just little vocal fills heard in many choral renditions of the piece and if squeezing them in becomes too much of a problem, just omit them.

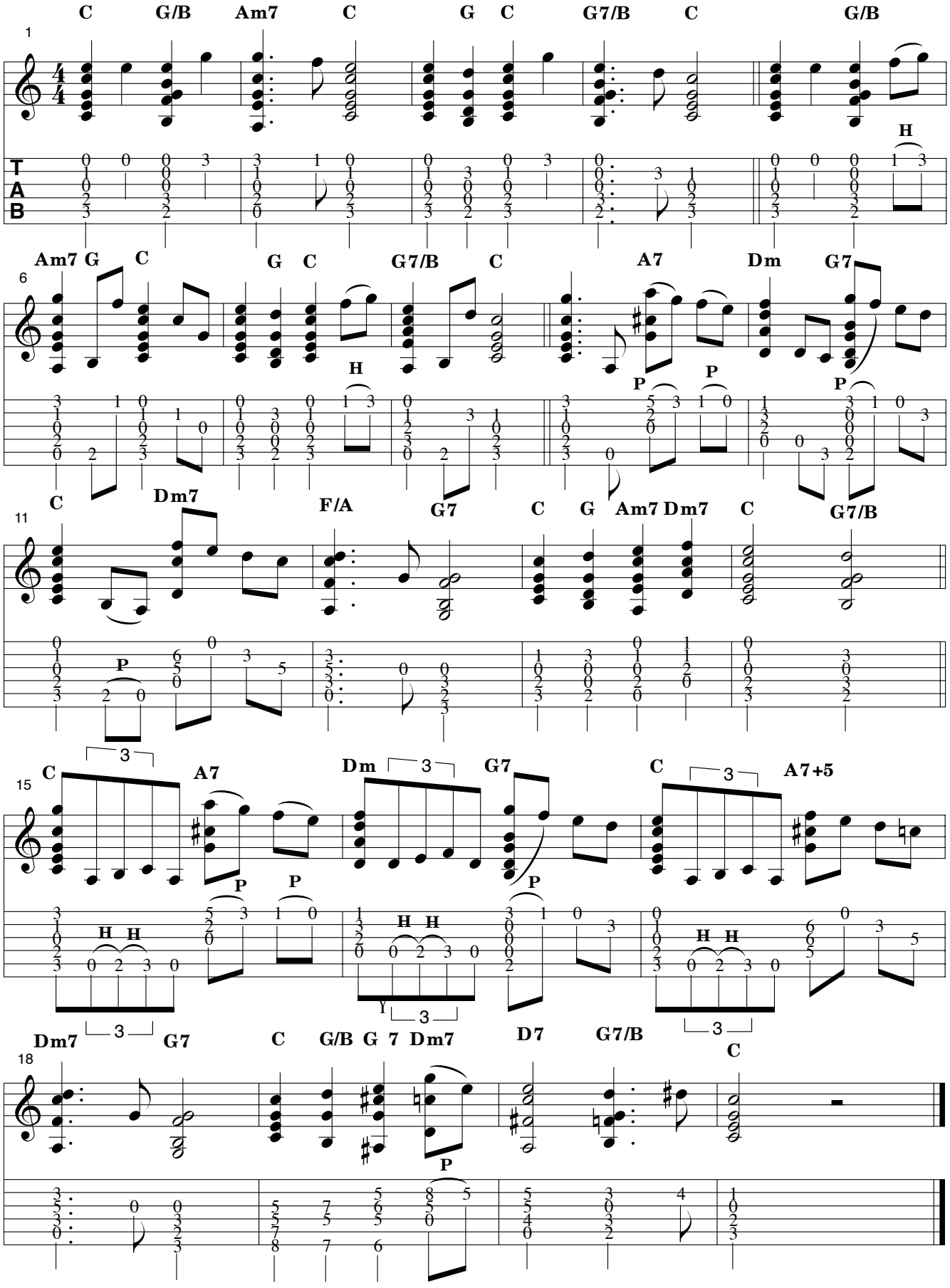
Lastly, you may have noticed that the whole piece is played on lower neck except for measure 19. What we have here is a jazz-influenced progression consisting of C, G/B (G chord with a low B on the bass), G diminished 7th, and Dm7, which segues into D9 in measure 20.

To repeat the arrangement (21 measures isn't very long), just proceed directly from the last measure to the beginning without pause.

As usual, if seeing the chord forms for the entire arrangement would be of help, just write to me at 4950 East 20th Ave, Post Falls, Idaho 83854. Next year, I promise to offer more tunes that consist of handfuls of notes instead of handfuls of chords. I've received a few good suggestions lately that'll put us more on a bluegrass and country gospel track. In the meantime, have a wonderful Christmas season.



Angels We Have Heard On High

Arranged by Harold Streeter

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"Obadiah Johnson"

Obadiah Johnson is a "rousing" fiddle tune written in the unlikely key of C#minor. The primary reason for that is due to the fact that in writing a particular book on guitar technique, I needed a good "picking tune" in C#minor. After I jotted the tune down, I started thinking that this might be a good "revenge" tune for a flatpicker caught in a fast paced jam session. "Just follow along boys, I'll play the first few bars. . . Oh, incidentally, the key is C#minor!"

It reminds me a yet another story about my father. He had a wicked sense of humor, usually at its sharpest at someone else's expense. Mel was playing a dance one weekend for an airline. The tenor sax player in the band was a pilot for that airline so everyone in attendance knew him. Dad stepped up to the microphone and gave this sax player a big introduction and said that the band would feature him on the jazz ballad, "Body and Soul." Everyone gathered around the bandstand to hear the tenor saxophonist play the tune. After the first 8 bars, devilish Mel rolled out a B7 chord thus changing the key to E Major and putting the tenor sax in the key of F#major! It took the poor saxophone player another 8 measures to find out what planet he was on and the final 16 measures to boop out one or two notes that worked in that key. Dad remembered that he thought he heard the sax player say over the boos and catcalls, "Mel, someday I'll get even!"

The title comes from the name of one of my favorite elementary school janitors. Finally, I have also included an additional version of the tune in a more respectable key. Happy picking!

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Obadiah Johnson

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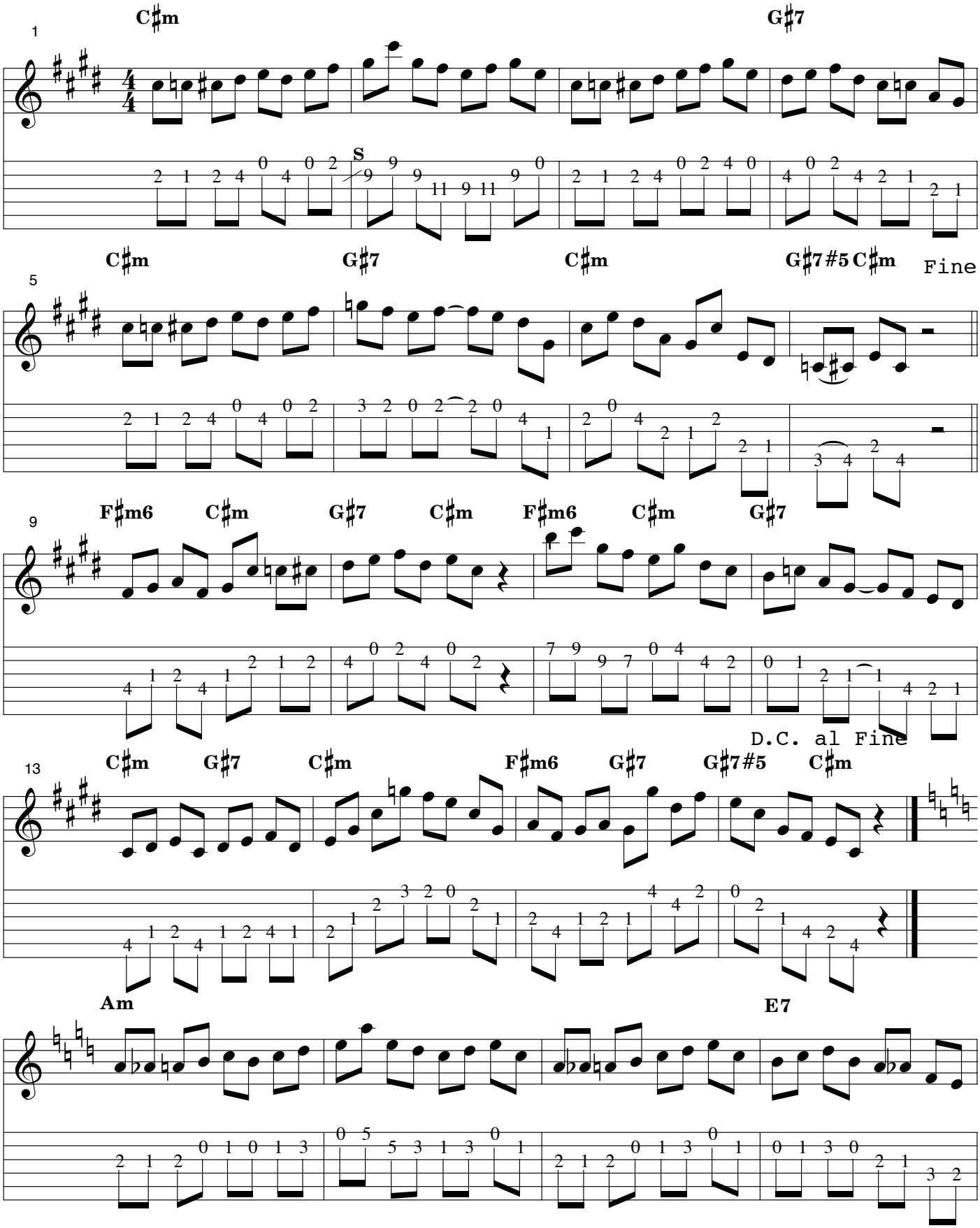
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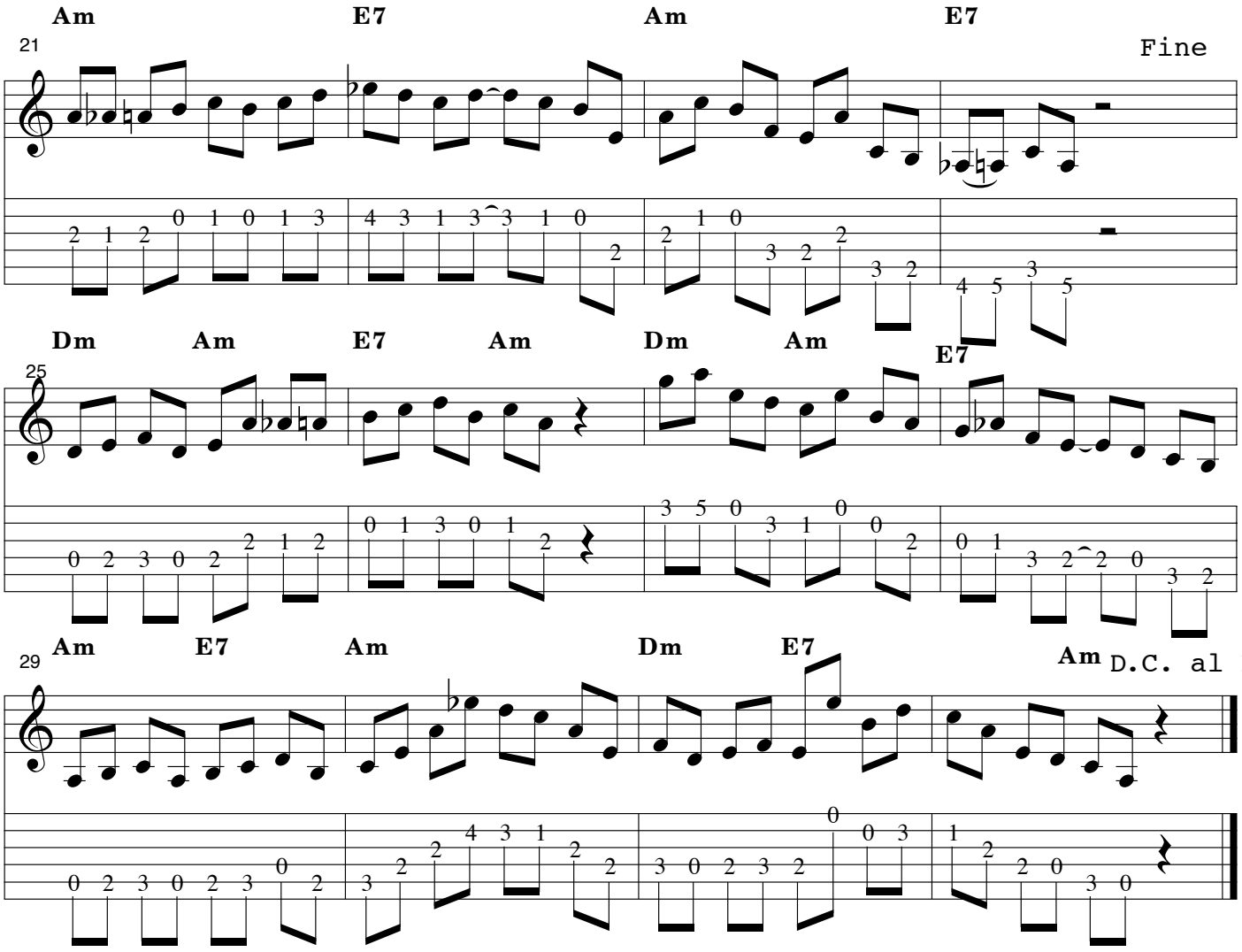
Obadiah Johnson (con't)



On The Web

by David Dugas

Welcome to On The Web! In this column I'll cover a very useful festival site as well as sites with information on home recording information. Here we go!

Are you curious if there's a local festival happening this weekend? Festival Finder will probably have it. Very cool site!
http://www.festivalfinder.com/

Here's a site that has excellent info on recording techniques as well as digital computer hard disk recording. Excellent stuff!
http://homerecording.com/

Are you interested in Digital Audio Tape (DAT)? If so, then here's the site for you!
http://www.shoey.com/dat/da-p1.html

Here's a great introduction to digital recording.
http://www.digital-recordings.com/publ/pubrec.html

Search on Sound in the UK is a great resource for equipment reviews:
http://www.sospubs.co.uk/

Have you ever wanted to know how a microphone works?
http://arts.ucsc.edu/EMS/Music/tech_background/TE-20/teces_20.html

Roland US support page with info on hard disk recording, basics of modern recording, and mixing: **http://www.rolandus.com/support/docs/doc_main.htm**

Here are a few select links to sites that provide excellent info on the Roland Virtual Studio series of recorders:
http://www.vsplanet.com/Pages/News/
http://www.virtualstudio.org/
http://members.home.net/vstudio/
http://www.synthzone.com/roland.htm

In addition to the sites listed above I'd like to recommend a few books that will assist you with your personal recordings: "Digital Home Recording" by Carolyn Keating is an excellent introduction to the complexities of digital recording. "The Home Studio Guide to Microphones" by Loren Alldrin provides very useful information on microphones. It contains a list of many popular microphones along with the author's personal recommendations. "The Musician's Home Recording Handbook" by Ted Greenwald provides great information for the home recording enthusiast. "Home Recording for Musician's" by Craig Anderton is probably the bible of the home recording movement. Highly recommended!

Most, if not all, of the books mentioned are available from *Flatpicking Guitar Magazine* (800-413-8296).

Don't forget that I'm publishing all of the On The Web columns on my web site. **http://www.larp.com/ddugas/fgm/ontheweb.htm**

That's it for this edition of "On The Web"! I hope to get a chance to pick with you folks at a festival this Winter. Happy Pickin'!

PICKIN' FIDDLE TUNES

by Adam Granger

THE LARK OF THE IRISH

Greetings, birdbrains everywhere! We're going to visit the eccentric and quirky Lark family, from Ireland. This clan is one of the most interesting in tunedom: There are six tunes, all with titles pertaining to larks, and–get this–they're all double jigs. Right about now, you're probably talking out loud to your copy of *Flatpicking Guitar*, saying, "Riveting! As a norm, tunes with consanguinious nomenclature are disparate in format." Well, you took the words right out of my mouth, except that I would have used words I can understand—something like, "Huh. Usually, when you have a bunch of tunes with similar titles, it's just a coincidence, and the tunes are of all different types. Weird."

Anyhow, The Lark family is the victim of a fair amount of inbreeding. There are Lark tunes related to other Lark tunes; there are Lark tunes which share the same title but which are completely different in theme; there are Lark tunes with lots of different titles. My tune encyclopedia, *Granger's Fiddle Tunes for Guitar*, lists six different Lark tunes. Three of them have flown in for a family reunion:

The first is an E minor jig which also goes by the following titles: *Come in the Evening*, *Galloway Tom*, *Galway Tom*, *Galway Town*, *The Goat's Horn*, *Kelso Races, The Little Yellow Boy, The Spotted Cow, The Thrush's Nest, The Welcome,* and *A Western Lilt*. Have a go at it!

READING *EASY-TAB*

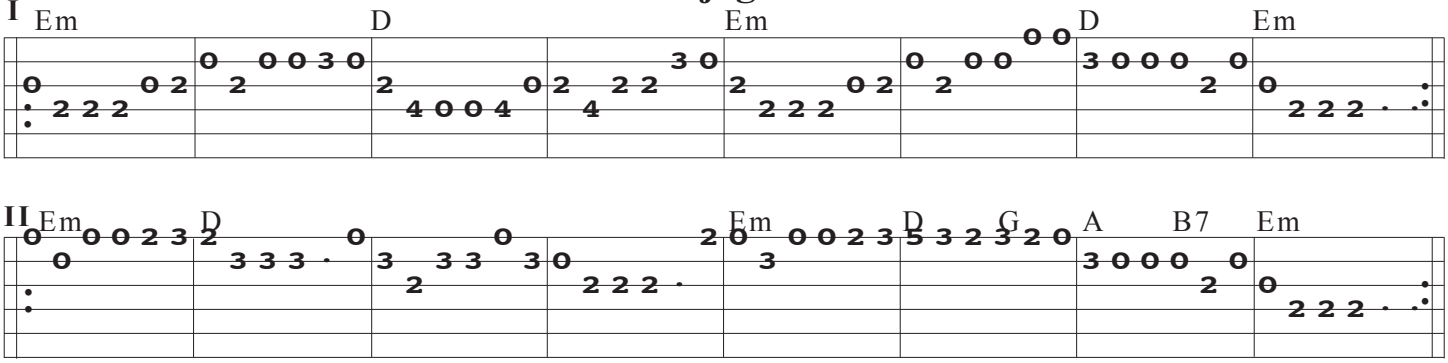
Easytab is like conventional tablature, except that timing notation has been streamlined and simplified. Since fiddle tunes are comprised mainly of eighth notes, *Easytab* uses the eighth note as its basic unit. An eighth rest is indicated by a dot. Therefore, a note with a dot after it is a quarter note, and a note with three dots after it is a half note. There are a total of eight notes

FOR BEGINNERS

Pick with an alternating style: down-up-down-up-down-up etc. The first note of each measure should be a downstroke, the last an upstroke. **Include rests** in this alternating pattern. This keeps you "in synch", playing downstrokes on the beats, so that, no matter what the configuration of notes and rests in an eight-unit measure, the right hand plays them

LARK IN THE MORNING–Em jig

KEY: Em



ANOTHER WORD ABOUT JIGS. . .

I say "another word" because I wrote a jig column for the second issue of *FGM*. For those unlucky souls who don't have that back issue, I'll do a condensed recap:

Jigs are based on a triplet form, and come in three flavors: the single jig, like *Pop Goes the Weasel*, the double jig, like *The Irish Washerwoman* and the slip-jig like *Ellen O'Grady*. (Not coincidentally, these three tunes are all featured in the above-mentioned jig column.)

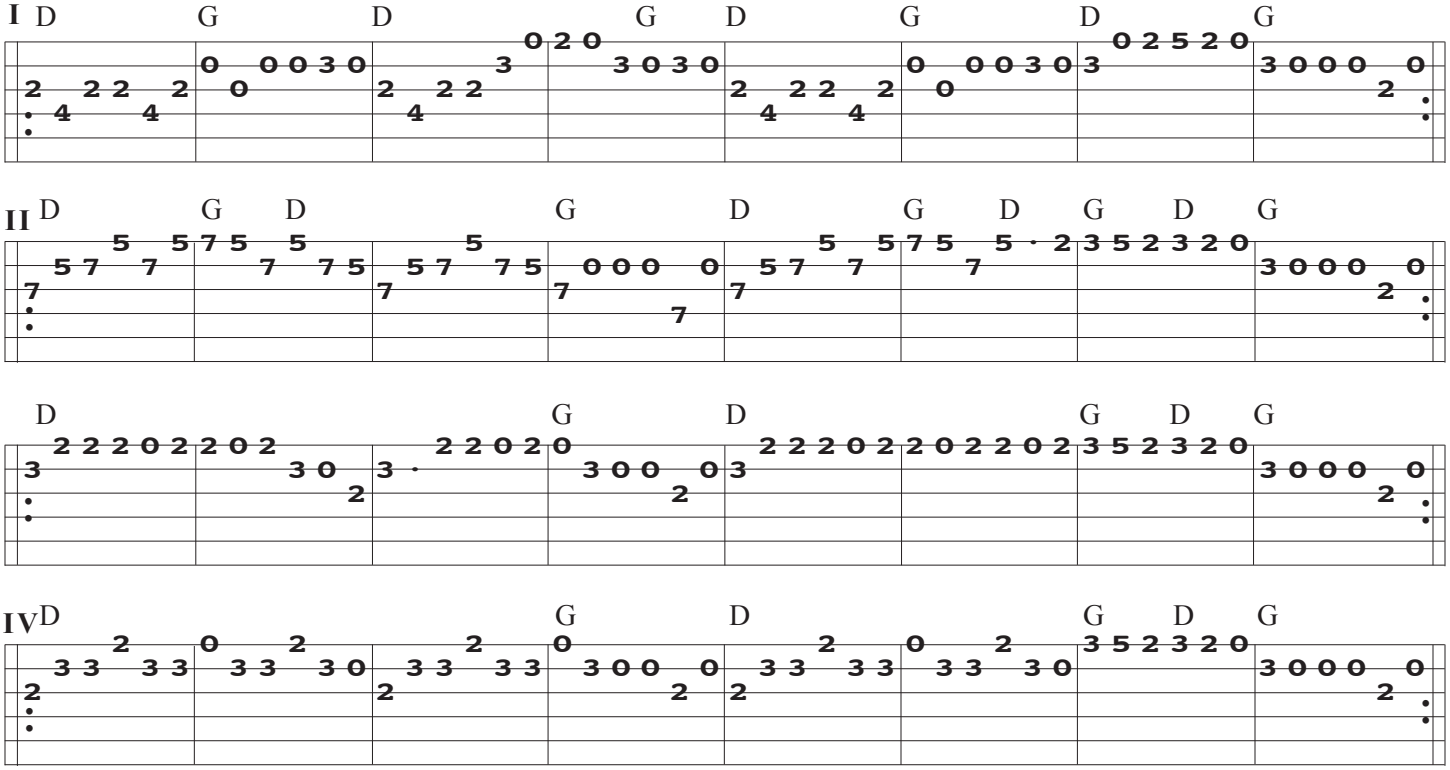
Jigs can be picked in one of two ways: either with straight alternation: down-up-down-up, or the authentic way: down-up-down down-up-down. The latter method provides the strongest jig feel, producing a nice lilt between the third note of the triplet and the first note of the next triplet, but many of us plectral Luddites just use alternation. If you number among us, gain solace from the fact that the jig feel and lilt can be gained by right hand dynamic control (i.e., punching those first and last notes, even when they're on upstrokes).

Okay, that's enough about technique. If you want the long version, buy the back issue (and all the rest of them, while you're at it. *FGM* is, after all, the best magazine in the world!)

Get out your binoculars, because our next subject has just been spotted. This D version of *Lark in the Morning* is completely different from the first offering. It is, however, a kissin' cousin to *Geese in the Bog* (which is, in turn, also known by twelve other titles—see what happens when you don't chaperone them?) and to yet another Lark family memeber, *Lark's March*, which bears the distinction of being one of only two five-part tunes I know (the other is the above-mentioned *Geese in the Bog*.)

LARK IN THE MORNING—D

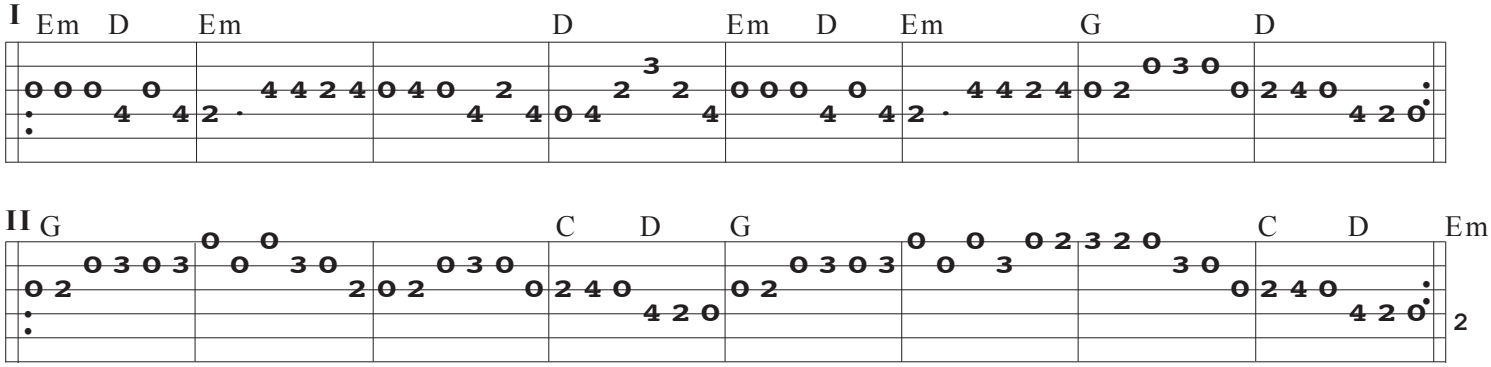
KEY: D



Finally, I present *Lark on the Strand*. This is one of three tunes by that title in my book; the other two are G jigs, and all three are vaguely related (as in, their sister married their uncle). This is a spiffy little jig which lays logically on the fingerboard and moves right along. Try it; you'll like it!

LARK ON THE STRAND

KEY: Em/G



Well, there you have an exultation of larks, folks. Jigs are undervalued among us flatpickers, and it is my ardent hope that enough of you will be infected that the bug will spread. Remember: jigs are nice: they're our friends; they use good table manners, and they practice good hygeine. They move gracefully along while at the same time being capable of kicking some serious butt when provoked. Oh, and by the way, if you're looking for a source for a source for good jigs, my book has about eighty.

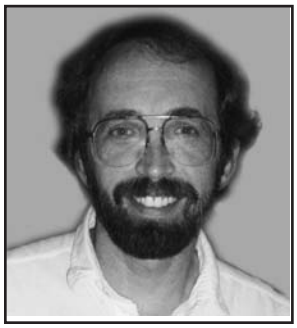
All right, you birdbrains. That's all for now. Until next time, keep your feathers clean and your beaks buffed, and remember: birds of a feather pick together.

Adam Granger is a collector. His house is full. There's no room for any more stuff, and yet he keeps bringing more stuff in. It's a serious problem, probably some sort of psychological thing. Friends and, especially, family have urged and begged him to seek professional help. They will probably resort eventually to an intervention followed by extended inpatient treatment, during which time they'll rent a bulldozer and a dumpster. . .

Exploring Bluegrass Guitar

The Blues in Bluegrass II

by Steve Pottier



Using Slurs

Putting the blues in bluegrass involves more than just playing a blues scale or blues licks. Because there is such simplicity in the chord structure, it becomes more important to play variations based on the melody. Where the blues part comes in is the way you approach those melody notes. My friend (former Blue Grass boy) Sandy Rothman tells me to try to play it like a singer would sing it. I found that when you do this, your solos will naturally sound more like you're playing the song, and you can put emphasis and emotion into it by imitating the vocals slides and bends. Good bluegrass singers like Bill Monroe will pay attention to every word they sing, and try to make it have some meaning, some impact. This is a worthy goal for all instrumentalists as well.

I've picked out "Live and Let Live" as a good song for a guitar break with some bluesy elements in it, with a lot of slides around the flatted 3rd on the G string. Some points to note:

1) The lead-in uses a slide from the flatted 7th.

2) The melody starts with a double stop slide, sliding up from the blues note.

3) The slide leading into the C chord also starts on the blues note. This is an important effect for your blues vocabulary.

4) The C lick is very bluesy. I play the choke with my flattened third finger sort of pulling down on it. You're not looking for a full bend here, more of a pull to give it some flavor.

5) Another blues note lead-in at the end of measure 6.

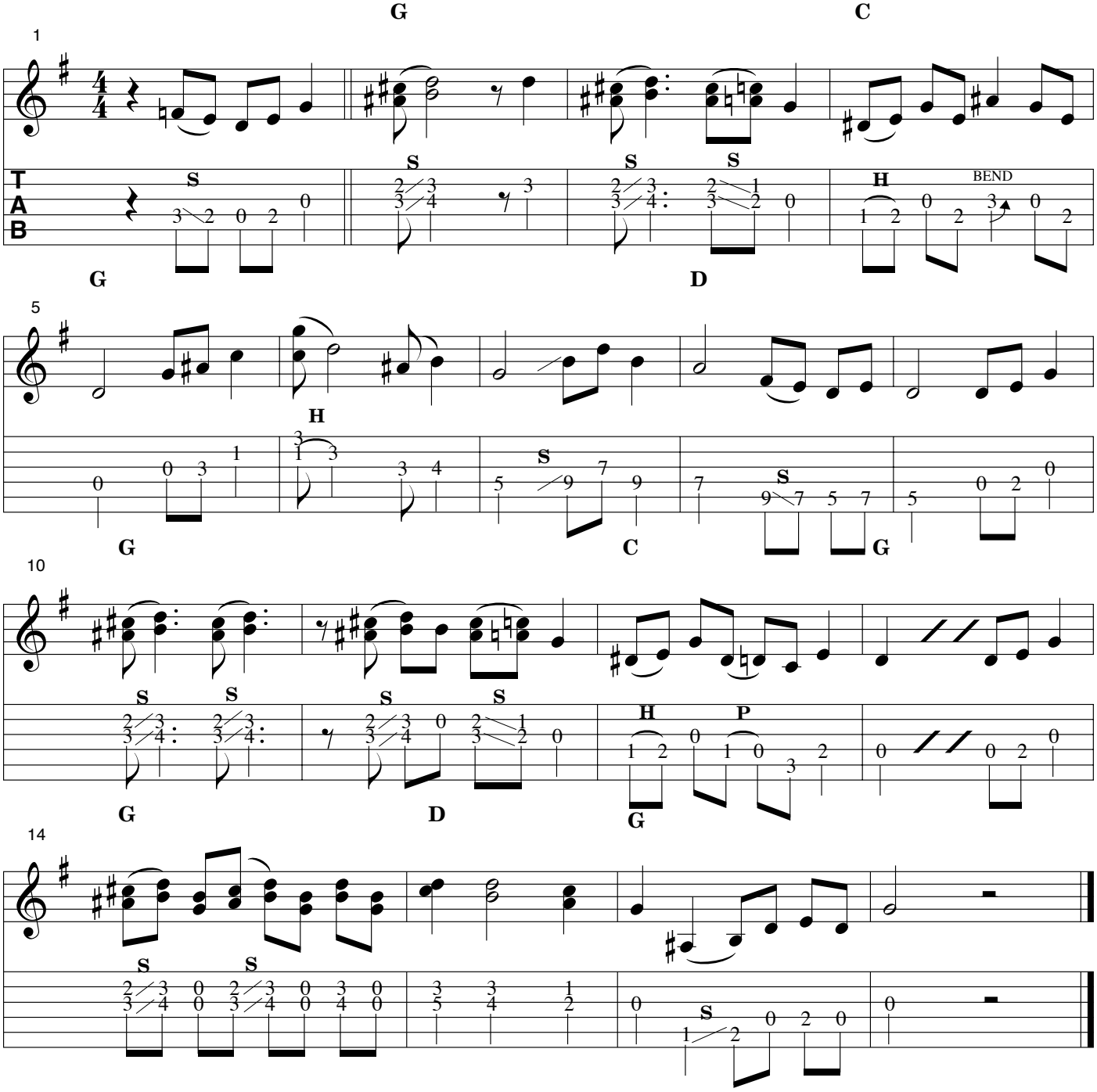
6) A bluesy hammer on. Could be bluesier if the first string were fretted at the first fret instead of the third fret. Pay careful attention to the fingering measures 6-9.

7) In measure 7, I wanted a vocal effect of lingering on the G, then a long slide to the next melody note. To get this, I had to go up the neck. The lick in D between measure 8 and 9 is a fiddle style fill-in—what to do when you finish the melodic phrase and waiting for the next phrase to start.

8) Measure 14 is a Scott Stoneman style lick. Watch the pick direction, and note that even though you are sliding, you're still picking down and up as well.

Have fun with this, it's a great tune to jam on when your tired of jamming on fiddle tune after fiddle tune.

Steve Pottier New email address:
stevepottier@home.com

Live And Let Live

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John McGann's Eclectic Acoustic

Solos on Songs I: "This Moment Is Your Home"

I'll be taking a break from the Irish focus for now and selecting some solos from the new Rust Farm CD *Snows of March* (available from Flatpicking Mercantile). I particularly enjoyed making this recording for a number of reasons: Tim O'Brien agreed to produce and play, which made for some new friendships and a great atmosphere; and the fact we recorded it in a house on a remote island off the coast of Maine. Some friends allowed us to take over their home—we imported Alan Williams, a great engineer who brought a selection of fine microphones and recording gear. He set up in the attic and we setup in the living room, four musicians in four corners. Everything was recorded live except for the harmony vocals, so the performances are as "real as it gets," with the occasional imperfectly executed idea compensated by the overall feel and spirit in the performances.

Chris Moore is a rare songwriter who combines a deep love and knowledge of traditional bluegrass and country music with a broad interest in a variety of subjects. I find his lyric writing to be very literate and inspiring. I try to direct my playing on his songs to suit the mood and imagery. "This Moment Is Your Home" finds the narrator admiring his partner's freewheeling nature, while regretting his own caution.

I wanted to assume the role of the risk taker, so my approach here was 100% improvisational, with no ready-made phrases; I decided a moment before the solo came around to start on the Db and slide down the neck, but after that was anyone's guess. I felt the solo on this piece called for as much expression as I could muster, which for me includes a variety of slurs, slides, and a balance of phrasing that includes silence (rests) as well as a variety of rhythms. In retrospect, I can point to the great alto saxophonist Cannonball Adderley for having a direct influence on this solo's bluesy phrasing.

This approach won't win any contests, but then again, I've heard some very "perfect" playing in contests that I consider very musically dull. I wouldn't approach every solo or song from this standpoint, but like many things in life, occasional risk taking can allow the kind of growth and freedom that playing it safe won't allow.

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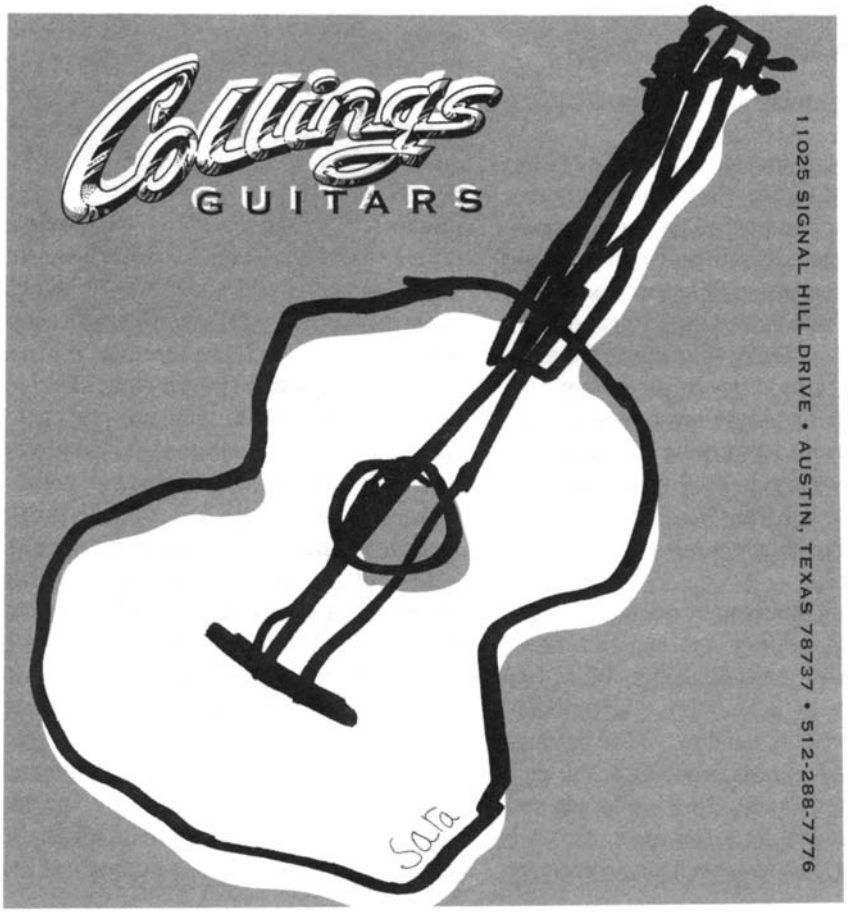
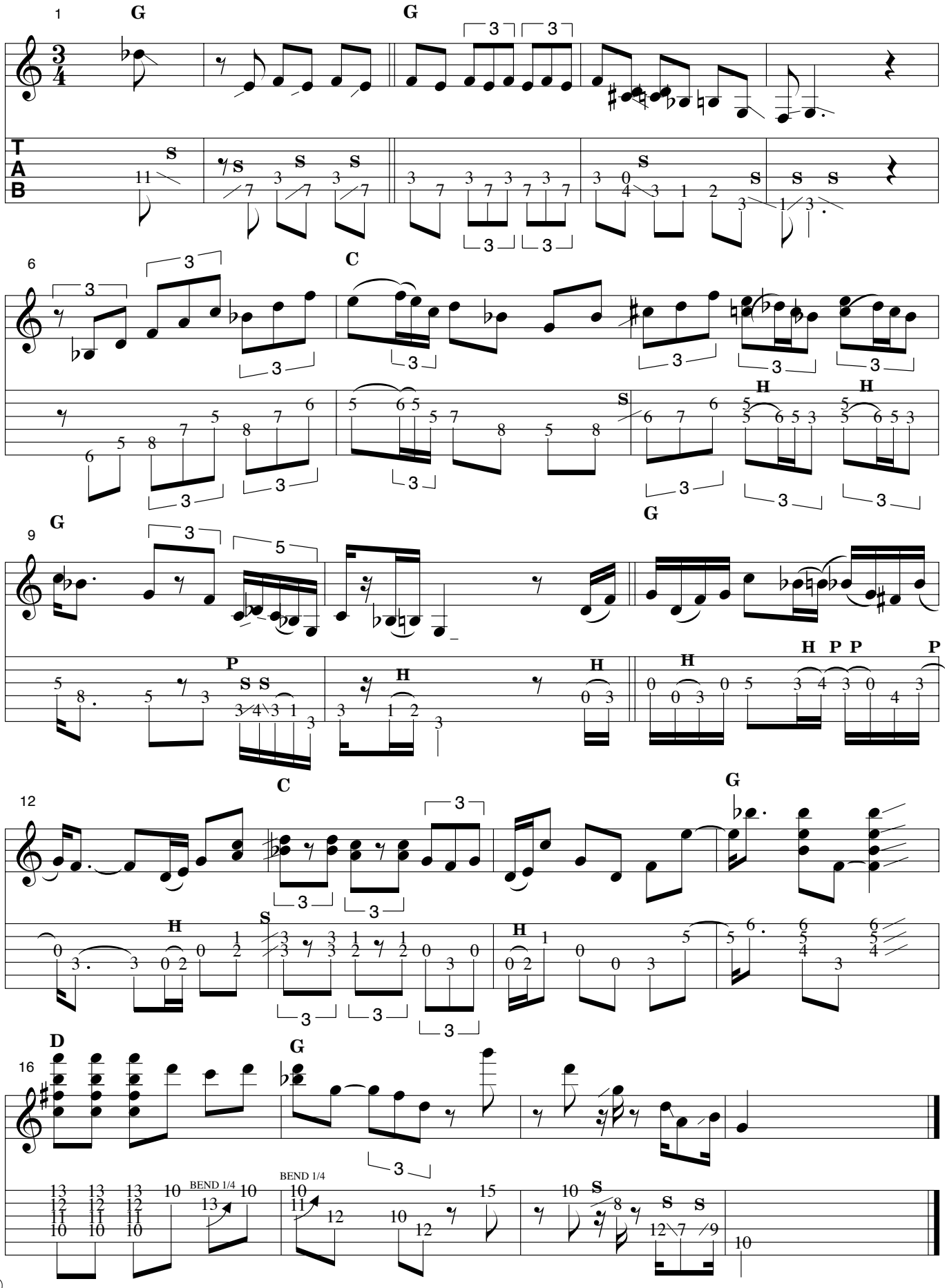


This Moment Is Your Home

Arranged by John McGann

New Release Highlight

Andy Falco with Buddy Merriam & Backroads: *It's Blue Grass Time*

by Dan Miller

Most of the flatpickers we cover in this magazine have a story similiar to this issue's cover artist—they grew up in Appalachia and started playing bluegrass as a young boy. However, our CD highlight artist in this issue, Andy Falco, has quite a different story.

First off, Andy grew up in Long Island, New York—not a place one imagines to be a hot bed of bluegrass. Secondly, Andy grew up playing rock and roll music on the electric guitar. It wasn't until about three years ago that Andy became intensely interested in learning how to flatpick. Like many of us, the single event that inspired that interest was hearing Doc Watson play the guitar.

Andy explains, "Three years ago when I came to the Winterhawk festival and heard Doc Watson, that is when I said, 'I really got to sit down and start figuring some of this stuff out.'" Andy adds, "I don't think I've bought a non-bluegrass record in a couple of years now."

At the time of his Doc Watson discovery, Andy Falco was twenty-four years old and already a full-time musician. He was playing, and still plays, on Long Island in a six peice electric group called Water Street that he describes as a blend of American roots music, incorporating blues, gospel, jazz, bluegrass, and New Orleans funk. Shortly before he had seen Doc at Winterhawk, Water Street had begun playing an acoustic show every other Sunday in order to give them a chance to "play something different once in a while."

Regarding his acoustic gig, Andy recalls, "At the time we were playing out seven nights a week. We were playing our own material and it was always electric. The acoustic night was a gig that we would do in order to have the chance to do whatever we wanted. We would play cover tunes, and folk tunes, and whatever it is we wanted to do. It was a fun gig."

Andy's first exposure to bluegrass music came through his and his brother's interest in the Grateful Dead eventually

leading to discovering Jerry Garcia's participation in the Old and In The Way project. Remembering a reason why the band started playing their acoustic gig, Andy says, "One of the things that turned me onto bluegrass and acoustic music the most was the honesty of it. I would go to an electric gig and I'd have an amp and wah-wah peddles and stuff. You depend a lot on your amp to break up in a certain way to get the certain tone that you want. With the bluegrass stuff, I walk in with my guitar and I sit in front of the microphone. There is nothing to hide behind. You are playing a guitar and there is no tricks. That is what really excites me about bluegrass."

It was during one of the band's acoutic sets that Andy met Buddy Merriam. Andy said, "I was bringing a mandolin to the acoustic night and this friend of mine said, 'You've got to meet this friend I have. He is a mandolin player.' You figure, 'Yea, OK.' A couple of weeks go by and the guy shows up with Buddy. I had my mandolin there and had played a couple of tunes. We met Buddy and asked if he wanted to come up and sit in with us. So he comes up and, you know, you never know what you are going to get. . .but he blew us away. After hearing Buddy, I never brought my mandolin back to that gig. We said, 'Buddy you have got to come to this gig from now on.' So that is how we met Buddy."

Buddy Merriam helped "fan the flames" of Andy's interest in bluegrass by taking him to bluegrass shows and picking parties and loaning him bluegrass recordings. It was Buddy who took Andy to Winterhawk to see Doc Watson.

After Andy had his "Doc experience" (we've all had one, haven't we?), Buddy Merriam made some tapes of Doc Watson and Clarence White for Andy to listen to and Andy began to immerse himself in bluegrass guitar. Andy states that Clarence White has been his greatest influence in bluegrass, pointing to Clarence's timing and tastefullness as elements of the Clarence White style that captures his ear. Andy said, "Clarence always seemed to place the notes in the perfect spot. His rhythm is always 'right there.' And he is always doing interesting things. His guitar playing moves me and inspires me."

Andy, now twenty-seven, began playing guitar in the fifth grade. He says, "My older brother, who is four years older than me, played guitar and I used to watch him play. I started to pick up his acoustic guitar when he wasn't playing it and just started by fooling around with it." By the time he was thirteen Andy was already playing the electric guitar in bands who played the classic rock music of the Doors and the Grateful Dead.

Andy says that from the beginning his learning process has always been by ear and by watching. Although he was a six-year veteran of rock bands by the time he was nineteen, he had only taken one formal guitar lesson before entering college. While in college he took a two semester classical guitar course and says that he found it helpful in developing his right hand for fingerstyle playing and his left hand fingering technique.

When asked if it was difficult to make the move from being an electric guitar player to being a bluegrass player in terms of rhythm playing, Andy said, "Yea, I had to work on that, especially the right hand. I've spent a lot of time on that. I'll put the metronome on and play the rhythm for

Andy Falco

a song like 'Nine Pound Hammer' for an hour. I've mainly been working on keeping my right hand as tight as possible and trying to minimize the movement."

Andy continues, "In any kind of music I was every trying to learn, whether it was jazz, or blues, or whatever, I just listened to it and listened to it and listened to it. I would not even pick up an instrument. I would just listen. By doing that, I got it into my head and it made it easier when I went to play it. By listening to it, and knowing what is was supposed to sound like, it made it easier to pick it up. Ronnie (fiddle player Ron Feinberg) and Buddy would help me out with the rhythm and let me know when I needed to punch it or when I should place in a certain run. Knowing how it was supposed to sound and then having them there to lead me in the right direction was a big help."

When asked if his rock and roll electric guitar background has and influence on his approach to flatpicking the acoustic guitar, Andy said, "Because I come from that background, I sound a little bit different from someone who has been playing bluegrass since they were a little kid and I think that is because of the different influences that I have had. But it actually goes the other way more often. The stuff from the acoustic guitar now shows up on the electric guitar. I find that happening a lot."

Buddy Merriam and Back Roads is a band that has been together under Buddy's leadership for just over twenty years. The current configuration includes: Buddy Merriam on mandolin; Andy Falco on guitar; Andy's little brother Pat Falco on bass; Andy's cousin, Chris Maloy, playing rhythm guitar player singing lead; Ron Feinberg on fiddle; and Jerry Oland on banjo. Although Andy still plays with his electric band, he says work with Buddy's band has been keeping him pretty busy from May through October. He says, "We play festivals, wineries, fairs, evening town sponsors concerts. . .mostly in the Northeast."

Buddy Merriam and Back Roads:
It's Bluegrass Time

I was behind the table at the *Flatpicking Guitar Magazine* booth at this summer's Grey Fox festival in upstate New York when a man walked up and asked if we reviewed CDs in our magazine. I said that we did and he handed me a CD. I looked at the CD cover. Printed on the front was, "Buddy Merriam & Back Roads *It's Bluegrass Time*." I reasoned, from the picture on the cover of the CD, that the man standing in front of me must be Buddy Merriam. I had not heard of Buddy, but I had a CD player in the booth and so I popped the CD in and put on the headphones. I listened to the first song, "Letter From Your Son," for about 30 seconds and said to Buddy, "this is good!" Buddy said, "check out 'Shake & Howdy.'" I forwarded to the seventh cut. I listened, "Good guitar playing! We can review this." Buddy then introduced me to Andy Falco.

It's Bluegrass Time is a great CD. The vocals are impressive, the band is tight, the tune selection and lyrics are very good, and all the instrumental breaks are excellent. It is pleasant to listen to and there is a sufficient variety to keep your interest. Here is the play-by-play:

The first two cuts are hard driving bluegrass—great drive, great vocals. Cut three "Convict's Fate," is the classic mournful, lonesome song. Andy provides a wonderful down-stroking bluesy guitar break here. It is Bill Monroe style mandolin on the guitar.

On cuts four, "Blue Grass Time," we get our first instrumental. This fiddle style tune was written by Buddy Merriam and highlights his superb mandolin playing. However, all instrumentalists in the band get a chance to shine on this one. We get to hear Ron Feinberg's fiddle playing, Jerry Oland's five-string banjo, and Andy lays down an great fiddle tune flatpicking break.

On cut five and six, "I'm Afraid My Darlin's Gone," and "Bergold's Farm" we have mid-tempo lonesome songs--one is about heartbreak, the other about an old man losing his farm. It's great traditional bluegrass.

Cut seven is another instrumental, "Shake & Howdy." This one was also written by Buddy. He said that he originally wrote it as a mandolin number, but when he heard Andy tear into it, he decided to highlight Andy on this one. Andy leads off and then takes a second break later in the tune. We've tabbed out Andy's first break in this issue and the entire tune can be heard on the *Flatpicking Guitar Magazine* audio CD that accompanies this issue.

On cut eight we are back to another hard driving tune in "There's Something You Should Know," followed by an instrumental waltz called "Laurie's Waltz." Andy takes a soulful break here. I like the fact that he doesn't try to play too many notes. He really allows this solo to breath. By this time, Andy's versatility as a guitar player is really becoming evident. So far he has given us bluesy, fast and furious, and slow and soulful.

Cut ten is Monroe all the way with "Blue Yodel #4." On cut eleven, "Cadillac Car," we get another great hard driving bluegrass number with a touch of novelty in the lyrics. Andy takes a short break that is fast, but very clean and fits the song perfectly.

Cut twelve gives us something that we have yet to hear on this disc—a swing tune. Written by and featuring the group's fiddle player Ron Feinberg, this tune allows us to see yet another side of Andy Falco's guitar playing. The man can swing!

The CD ends with the great gospel number "Body & Soul" performed as good as I've heard it done. Andy adds another down-stroking bluesy guitar break here. I love that stuff! It's like Chuck Berry playing bluegrass.

All in all I really enjoy this CD and have listened numerous times. Andy Falco's guitar playing is fresh and interesting and he displays a great deal of versitility. If you like traditional bluegrass and are looking for something new to spin on the CD player, I'd highly recommend checking out Buddy Merriam and Back Roads.

When the current configuration of Buddy Merriam and Back Roads went into the studio to record *It's Bluegrass Time* Andy Falco was running a high fever. Andy said, "Buddy had booked time at a studio down in Delaware on the weekend and I was feeling awful. I went down there hoping that I was going to get better, but it didn't happen. I layed on a couch in the studio under a blanket, shivering. When it was time to record my parts, I said, 'Give me the guitar' and went in and recorded. Usually really anal about my parts, but I was so sick I just played and left. Looking back at it, I think that approach helped me in a lot of ways because I wasn't over analyzing my guitar parts. I think it came out more natural."

Andy plays a Martin 1998 HD-28. He uses large triangle Clayton Ultem 1.20mm.

Below we have provided a transcription of Andy Falco's first solo to Buddy Merriam's tune "Shake & Howdy."

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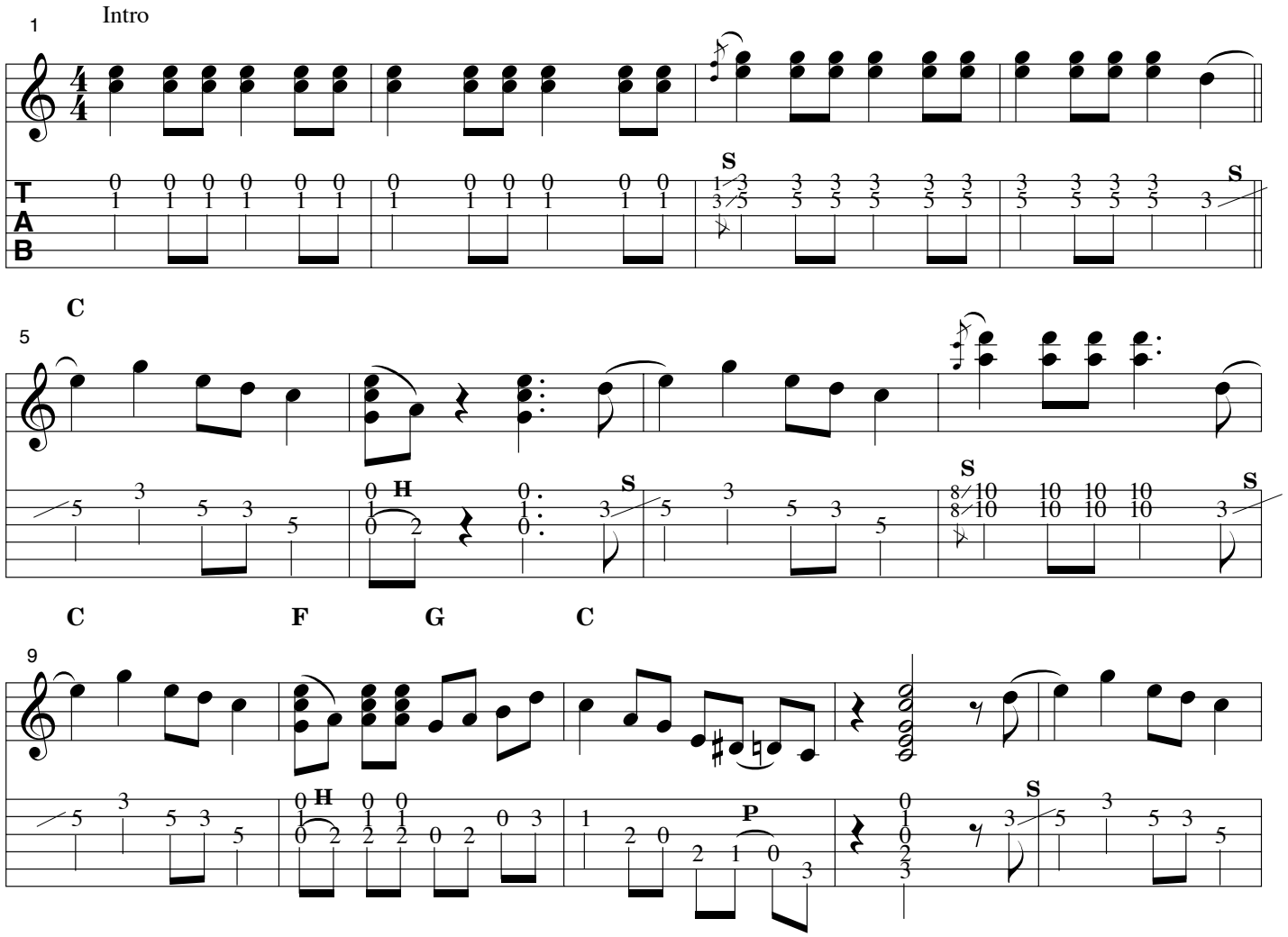
Shake & Howdy

Written by Buddy Merriam
Arranged by Andy Falco
Transcribed by Brad Davis

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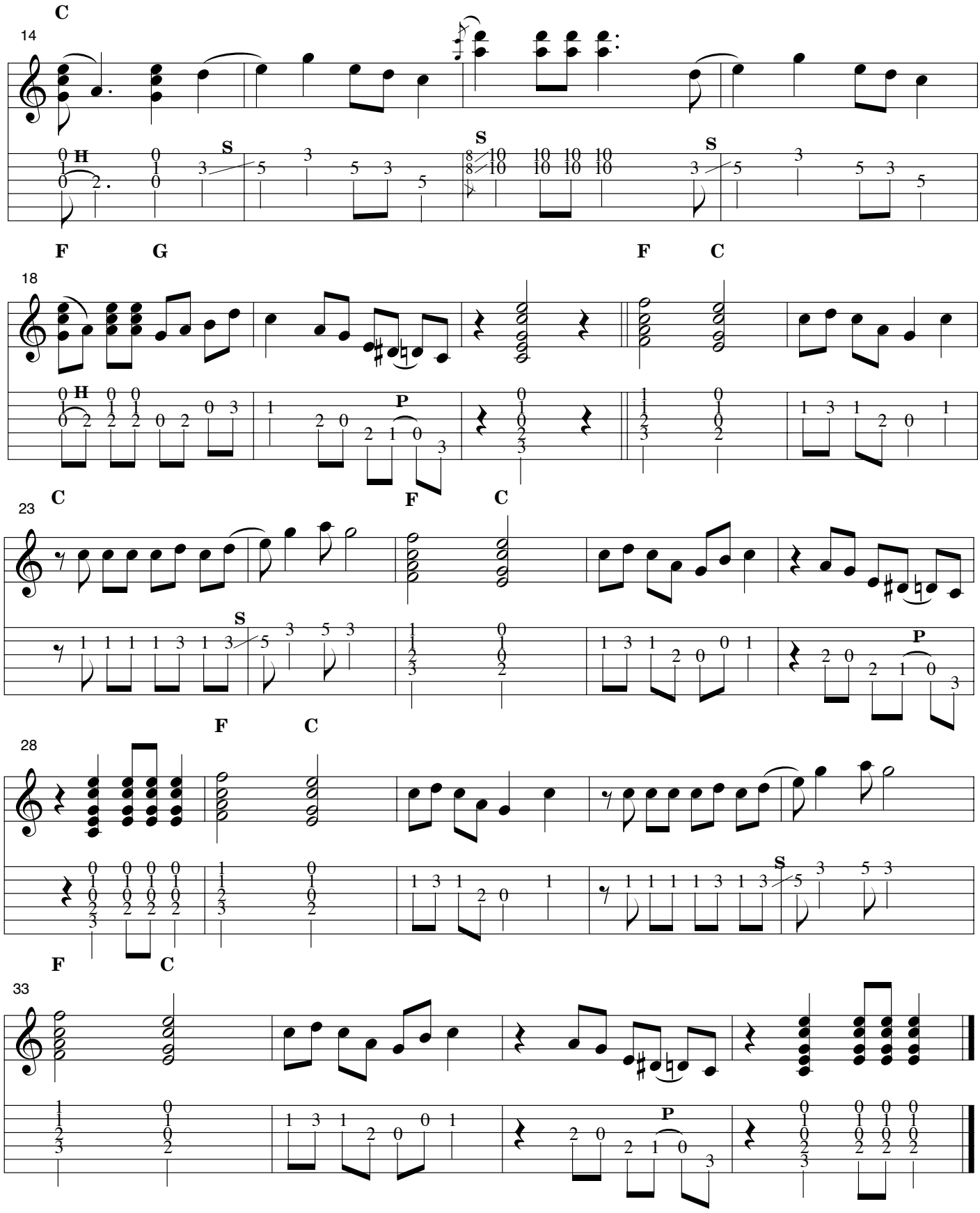

Reviews

CD Reviews

Two
Missy Raines and Jim Hurst
Pinecastle Records

Reviewed by David Moultrup

Soul. Passion. Sensitivity. Groove. Thoughtful lyrics. Heartfeltvocals. Scrumptious harmonies. Monster Musicians with brilliant interplay, and impeccable recording. With the release of *Two*, Jim Hurst and Missy Raines have raised the bar. Yes, they have shown that a killer piece of work can have it all. These elements are oozing out of the pores on this one, with this reviewer left at risk for the over-use of superlatives.

The music bursts out of the speakers from the start. A fat, soulful bass lays down a pulsing groove, soon to be joined by a guitar that speaks with the bass and pulls the listener deep into the music. On the first cut, it is Missy who then joins in with a sincere look at a way of life in a "Small Southern Town." Jim then delves into the pain of a broken heart with "Once the Teardrops Fall." A hot swing groove propels "How Long Must I Wait for You", and life on the road gets its due with "Nothing To Lose." With these, and all of the vocal cuts, the formula is the same. Refer to the ingredients list above.

The recorded sound of both the guitar and the bass have an up-close feel. To my ears, this mimics the up-close sense of the vocals. If the mics for the guitar and bass seem like they're inside the instruments, Jim and Missy have conveyed the sense of pulling the vocals from deep inside them, showing no fear of touching tender feelings, including true love ("Rhythm of 2 Hearts"), lives that have ended ("I Will Not Forget You"), and the importance of living life to the fullest ("The Important Part of Fishin").

Now, about the instrumentals. With this mag being home base for the flat-picked fiddle tune, it should be noted that there's not a fiddle tune to be found on this CD. The three instrumentals, "Stinky Pye," "Two Funky for Rhythm," and "Noche Romantica," aside from simply being great music, still offer the flatpicker plenty to learn. These tunes beautifully exploit the acoustic guitar's personality, and eliminate any notions that a guitar needs a cord and amp to be funky, bluesy, and jazzy.

Whether you want to hear a great duet, enjoy wonderful tunes, or learn about good acoustic guitar, *Two* gets the nod. Raines and Hurst, mainstays in Claire Lynch's bluegrass band, show impressive breadth and depth with this set. If *Two* gets buried in the bluegrass bin of the local music shop, it might not get the audience it deserves.

Dan Crary & Lonnie Hoppers and Their American Band
Pinecastle Records

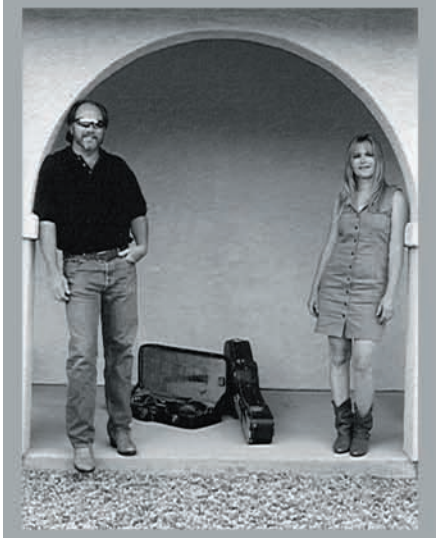
Reviewed by David Moultrup

Dan Crary and Lonnie Hoppers have captured that elusive sense of creating something new that feels like it's been around forever. It has the feeling of a familiar pair of shoes that are great to slip into when it's time to relax. What could be more familiar than a name like the "American Band"? The tunes, also, are familiar ones. "Nine Pound Hammer," "Closer Walk with Thee," "John Henry," and "Sitting on Top of the World" are just a few of the fine old tunes that get treated during this set. And most importantly, the players are all very familiar with each other. Crary, a flatpicking pioneer, and Hoppers, a pillar of the banjo contingent, have known each other for close to four decades. They are joined here by good friends John Moore on mandolin, Jamie Haage and Dale Hopkins alternating on fiddle, and Marlon Collins on bass.

Their familiarity with each other truly shows up in the music. The ensemble playing is a delight. Even when the accelerator is pushed to the floor, and the tune is travelling in the high speed lane, the soloists have a rock solid foundation. And in case anyone had any doubts, these fellas can play. Especially impressive is how chops are kept under control and used to create a unified whole. Sure, there are the occasional hot licks that let the listeners know that these guys can let 'em rip with the best. But hot licks don't disrupt the flow. The music exudes the mature personality of masters at work.

Crary mentions in the liner notes that he had a blast getting together with old friends and letting loose some Midwestern roots energy. That feeling comes through loud and clear. Anybody interested in knowing what it feels like to hear good friends kick back and do some serious front porch pickin' and grinnin' would need to track this one down.

The Mike and Bertye Maddux Band



"The recent addition of banjoist Sam Coffey makes this a trio not to be missed!"

"...Soul, creativity and talent- Bertye and Mike have it all!"

Peter Wernick
President,IBMA

"Your CD will find a good home on my program. It's great stuff!"

Gerald Pike, CKCW's Sounds of Bluegrass-Canada

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Crucial Smith
Morning Light
ReQuest Records 21500

Reviewed by David McCarty

I know the members of Crucial Smith probably cringe every time their band is compared to New Grass Revival, but being compared favorably to one of the most accomplished and exciting musical acts of the last decade can't be a bad thing. And the two bands do include many similar elements: the soaring lead vocals; the rock and roll electric bass; the dazzling instrumental skills and tight arrangements; and the penchant for writing and producing memorable original tunes and cleverly arranged traditional numbers. Of course, the fact that former NGR guitarist and vocalist Pat Flynn produced this CD further adds to the comparisons.

But on *Morning Light*, the members of Crucial Smith easily define their own sound in the progressive bluegrass genre. Kyle Wood's soulful, skybound vocals perfectly suit the band's energetic sound. Chris Joslin's especially gifted on both banjo and Dobro, and sings strong lead and harmony vocals. FGM readers already know about guitarist Tim May, who's been profiled in these pages earlier for his tasteful, clear-toned flatpicking. Throughout this CD, his guitar provides harmonic counterpoint in tight instrumental arrangements or powers the band along in consort with Dave Holladay's electric bass.

Like the new Lonesome River Band album with Kenny Smith, the guitar is not center-stage here. May plays intricate, musical breaks on most of the tunes here, displaying a ton of tone, taste and talent without needing to blow away listeners with his speed and technique. But just wait until you get to track 7, where his breakneck guitar intro sets the tone and tempo for his warp-speed original tune "Slow It Down." Kyle Woods' lickety-split mandolin break here will turn many heads, too. Later, May's haunting lead in to "St. Anne's Reel" reminds us all how gorgeous and delicate this ancient melody truly is.

Morning Light captures one of America's top new bluegrass bands at the height of their talent. There's plenty of great playing here, so many FGM readers will probably want to have a look.

Song List: Cry; Norfolk Captain; Rebuild The Union; Please, Please Me; Falling In love; Silver Moonlight; Slow It Down; Last Love Letter; King of Babylon; Morning Light; St. Anne's Reel; Light Of The Moon

Clarence White
33 Acoustic Guitar Instrumentals
Sierra Records

Review By David McCarty

One day in the early 1960s, Clarence White sat down with Kentucky Colonels bandmate Roger Bush and both men took out their guitars. In front of them sat a small tape recorder and a mic. With Roger playing backup, the young guitar genius methodically picked through nearly every guitar instrumental he knew, usually playing only a single chorus. He probably listened back to the tape a few time to gauge his playing, then put the tape away.

It sat forgotten in a box of Clarence's belongings until coming to light recently. John Delgatto, whose Sierra Records label has done more than anyone to keep the memory and music of Clarence White alive, took it upon himself to get permission to clean up the recording and issue the tape more or less as it was recorded more than 35 years ago.

The result is *33 Acoustic Guitar Instrumentals*. For anyone who has ever reveled in the genius of Clarence White's guitar

playing, this is manna from heaven. Clarence's 1950's D-18, which he used almost exclusively as his flatpicking guitar, is bright and punchy and clearly recorded. There's none of the bottom end distortion heard on some other releases of early Kentucky Colonels material featuring his stunning lead guitar.

It's fascinating to listen to a younger Clarence work through tunes that would later become trademark guitar pieces for him - "Nine Pound Hammer," "I Am A Pilgrim," Billy In The Lowground," "Farewell Blues" and more—and hear how he already had developed the incredibly sophisticated sense of timing and syncopation that made his later guitar work so breathtaking.

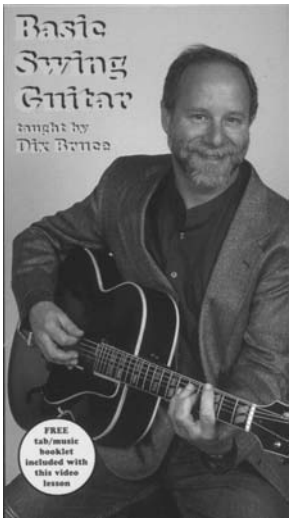
You can hear so many great moments here that recall brilliant phrases and lines he used on later recordings. The blazing Telecaster introduction on "Muleskinner Blues" from the Muleskinner studio album is a powerful echo of the opening lick he plays here to Don Reno's flatpicking classic, "Country Boy Rock and Roll." Much of Clarence's playing here had obviously been influenced by his exposure to Doc Watson. Many leads on this CD are straighter and more linear than on later versions. His Django-inspired trademark lick on "Farewell Blues" is missing, for example, although he still tries a similar melodic motif. "I Am A Pilgrim" experiments daringly with time and space, but lacks the reckless edge of adventure and exploration his later versions displayed. In a way, this CD may show Clarence's guitar playing in a more open and accessible way than anything else available, as his guitar technique still struggled to keep up with his unmatched musical imagination.

This musical treasure is as rare and valuable as an old Victrola recording of Bill and Charlie Monroe practicing their act for the Grand Ole Opry, if such a recording ever existed. But beyond the historical importance of this CD, the music contained here will enthrall any reader of *Flatpicking Guitar Magazine*. Thank you, John Delgatto, for keeping the faith and making this available! Here's hoping that even more of these kinds of rare gems can be retrieved from the vault of history in the near future.

Song List: Wildwood Flower; Master's Bouquet; Bury Me Beneath The Willow; Black Mountain Rag; Billy In The Lowground; I'm So Happy; He Will Set Your Fields On Fire; Sugarfoot Rag; Nine Pound Hammer; Cripple Creek; Under The Double Eagle; Farewell Blues; I Am A Pilgrim; Country Boy Rock and Roll; Forsaken Love; False Hearted Lover; Black Jack Davy; Banks of the Ohio; Jimmy Brown The Newsboy; Sally Goodin; Buckin' Mule; Shady Grove; Pike County Breakdown; Old Joe Clark; Footprints In The Snow; In The Pines; Journey's End; Pretty Polly; Cotten Eyed Joe; Clinch Mountain Backstep; Randy Lynn Rag; Mandolin Medley

Instructional Video Reviews

Dix Bruce *Basic Swing Guitar*
Stefan Grossman's Guitar Workshop
GW 309



Reviewed by Dave McCarty

FGM columnist Dix Bruce has quietly carved out a specialty niche teaching and playing string acoustic music styles for more than 30 years. Few players are more knowledgeable or so effective in conveying the technical issues of playing a particular style in a way that makes the student comfortable adopting new concepts in their own playing.

On *Basic Swing Guitar*, Dix sits down with his Gibson L7 archtop and musical pal Jeremy Cohen on violin to take guitarists through the very basic chordal forms commonly used in swing guitar. Explaining chord forms logically and clearly, Dix shows how several basic chord shapes can be moved around the fingerboard to play in different keys and how those shapes can be altered to create 7ths, minors, minor 7th and other relatively simple

Peter Rowan

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—Dan Miller, Editor
Flatpicking Guitar Magazine

NEW CD RELEASE
A FEW FAVORITES

Liner Notes—
"A Few Favorites" by Dan DeLancey
"From the first note of "The Girl I left Behind Me" to the last lick in "Clarinet Polka" you can tell that Dan DeLancey is a powerhouse guitar player. His playing is up-lifting and soulful. The song selection is splendid! Dan is backed by a group of super musicians who know how to make a recording work. A nicely thought out project that will remain a favorite of mine as I know it will be of yours. The only down side—and it was hard to find one—is that the recording is over too soon for me. It only means that I'll have to hit re-play all day!! Enjoy *"A Few Favorites"* as I have.

—Steve Kaufman • *3 Time National Guitar Champion*

Titles include: The Girl I Left Behind Me, Redwing, Memories Waltz, Uncle Herman's Hornpipe, The Shelter Of Your Eyes, Golden Eagle Hornpipe, Pass Me Not, Farther Along,

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chord formations.

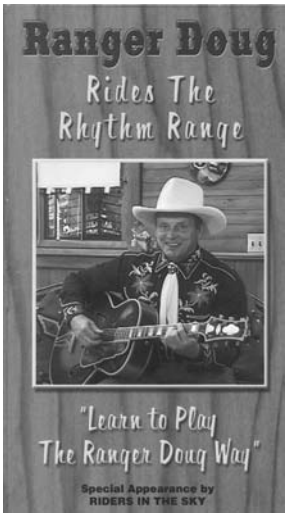
Each tune starts off with Dix and Jeremy swinging away through a couple of verses and choruses. Then Dix takes over to demonstrate what chords he used, often incorporating a split-screen to show both the right and left hand. It would be nice if the tape included titles at the start of each tune to allow the user to easily fast forward to a particular tune they want to learn, but individual songs are easy to find by just playing the tape when Dix and Jeremy are playing together.

True to its title, this is definitely "basic" swing rhythm guitar theory here. There's a brief section of TAB and notation at the start of each tune to show guitarists how to play the basic melody or head of each tune, but the emphasis is entirely on chords and rhythm patterns. By the time Dix gets around to teaching two classic swing numbers, "Rose Room" and "I Got Rhythm," the student will be playing some diminished and minor 7th chord forms and incorporating some nice chord substitutions. By keeping things at such a basic level, Dix avoids moving into chord formations such as 6th and 9th shapes that truly give swing guitar its distinctive sound, but that's material better left for subsequent videos.

Swing guitar is a blast to play, and Dix Bruce has produced one of the best introductory pieces I've ever seen for guitarists anxious to move beyond open chords. Highly recommended to beginning and intermediate guitars; more advanced players will want to look elsewhere.

Song List: Take Me Back To Tulsa; Minor Swing; Careless Love; Sweet Georgia Brown; Honeysuckle Rose; Blues in B-flat #1; Blues in B-flat #2; Rose Room; I Got Rhythm;

Ranger Doug Rides The Rhythm Range



Reviewed by Dan Dingeldein

Mighty Fine and a great Big Western Howdy to all you people out there in flatpick guitar land. The long awaited western swing guitar instructional video from the chord monster himself, Ranger Doug, has arrived.

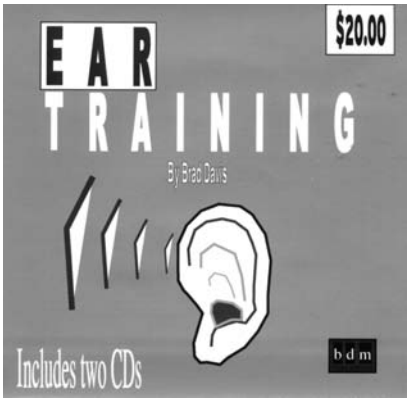
The video starts out with Ranger Doug joined with the Riders In The Sky to demonstrate two tunes, "Wahoo" and "Tumbling Tumbleweeds." Then Ranger Doug sits down and discusses the origination, who, what and whys of this guitar style.

Once he gets into his playing style he slowly demonstrates the chord patterns that he uses. He demonstrates both the four note chord patterns and the "Django style" three note chord patterns. Included with the video are chord pattern charts which give a graphical representation of the chords he plays on the video. He states how simple the patterns that he uses are and in this video he explains in great detail how those patterns are used.

This video is for everyone, whether your just starting out or if you've been playing for years. Doug explains his playing so that anyone can understand this western swing style. You can order this video by contacting: Too Slim's Mercantile 1921 Broadway, Nashville, TN 37203 or by calling (615)321-3810. You can even reach them on the web at www.ridersinthesky.com Or you can order it from Flatpicking Mercantile (800) 413-8296.

Ear Training Course Review

Ear Training Level 1
by Brad Davis
BDM Publishing



Reviewed by Brance Gillihan

Most of you reading this should be familiar with Brad Davis. If not, check out his column in this magazine as well as the story in Volume 1, Number 5, or the cover story in Volume 4, Number 1 of FGM. You will find that Brad is a very accomplished and successful guitar player. For those of you who want to know how Brad achieved this success, his 2 CD set "Ear Training" is the answer.

A lot of us flatpickers are well versed at reading and memorizing tab. But I, for one, find it troublesome to go searching for tab every time I want to learn something new. For several years now I've envied Brad, and other players of his level, the ability to hear something and then play it. Now Brad has given me the tools I need to develop that ability.

Brad starts CD one with an introduction and a tune-up track, and then explains what ear training is and why it's important. Next he talks about humming licks and melody phrases (the most important, and entertaining, track on the CD). He explains that learning to hum the melody or lick in your head is the first step toward being able to play it on your guitar. This is followed by ten lick examples in the key of G. Each lick is played very slowly and repeated four times. On the last two repitions, Brad hums along with the lick. This is helpful if you're new to this humming thing.

The "G" section is followed by ten licks in "C" and then ten in "D". Your mission, should you choose to accept it, is to learn to hum the lick quickly. If you can do so, you've learned the lick! Then all you have to do is convince those fingers on your left hand (yeah, the ones that always seem to go on strike just when you need them) to play what your brain hears. Easier said than done. Never fear, Brad walks us through the process. He explains how to teach your fingers what your brain already knows. He also demonstrates, with the last lick in each section, how quickly and easily you can transpose any lick you know to the key of your choice.

Some excellent "rhythm rehearsal"tracks are added toward the end of CD one. In this section Brads plays licks in the key of G, C, and D with a rhythm track playing in the background. Here you get a chance to put what you have learned to work. Brad plays a lick over the rhythm track and then leaves a space for you to hum or play the same lick back over the rhythm track. The rhythm track never stops rolling so you have to be ready to listen to the next lick as soon as you've made your attempt at playing back the lick you just heard.

The rhythm rehearsal tracks really put your memory recall to the test. Working with the rhythm rehearsal tracks over and over is where you can really build the skills you will need to go out to a jam session and take a break on a song that you have never played before simply by hearing the other players jam on the tune first.

CD two is a little more advanced. The licks are longer, more complex, and played faster. But the objective is the same, learn to hum the lick and then to play it. The licks here are presented in the keys of G, C, D, and E. An in-depth section on transposing is also included on CD two, along with more rhythm rehearsals.

All those lick excercises are great for training your ear, and they provide you with about 70 new licks from the mind of Brad Davis. Bear in mind that this is an "ear" training course, so no tab is included. If you want these licks, you've got to earn them. Of course that's the objective of this program, to enable you to learn melodies and lick phrases quickly. The material is presented logically and comprehensively. Don't get me wrong, it's not easy. It still requires hours of practice and dedication. And while I've listened to CD two several times, I'm still working with the first CD.

I would recommend this course to anyone who wishes to become not only a better guitarist, but a better all round musician. Once you've worked you way through both CD's you should be, to use Brad's words, "pretty oiled on the ear".

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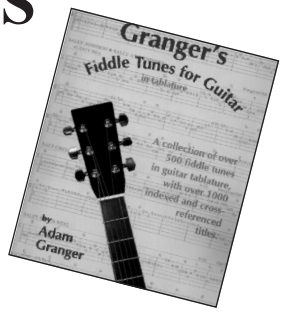
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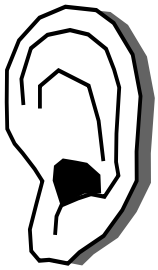

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Gear Review
by David Dugas

The Elliott Capo

As regular as clockwork, the question: "What's the best capo?" pops up on the Internet's Flatpick_L mailing list. The answers are usually consistent in that capos by such well-known manufacturers such as Shubb, Paige, Kyser, and John Pearse are mentioned along with the most excellent McKinney capo, which is manufactured and sold by Bill Stokes. However, over the past year a new name has been mentioned with increasing frequency, the Elliott Capo.

The Elliott capo (www.elliottcapos.com) is crafted by Phill Elliott, in his workshop in Rowlett, Texas using various milling and sanding machines (he also recently bought an engraving machine). Phill manufactures all of the parts for the capos with the exception of the thumbscrew, which is made on a screw machine for him. The Elliott capo resembles the McKinney capo in its overall shape, with numerous subtle (and not so subtle) differences. Since many folks have seen a McKinney capo, I'll use it as a reference in describing the Elliott capo.

First, the similarities. Both capos are made from polished stainless steel. Both capos use a thumbscrew to adjust tension and use a hard, clear plastic tubing that covers the top bar of the capos. Both have a problem fitting properly over the nut on my Collings Clarence White guitars and they each cost around $90. Coincidently, Phill Elliot and Bill Stokes live across the alley from each other in Rowlett, TX and have been friends for many years.

The differences? The McKinney has a metal clip that holds the bar onto the body of the capo, whereas the Elliott capo has a spring release mechanism built into the top bar, which releases it from the body of the capo. The spring mechanism makes the capo very easy to remove from the instrument.

Both the Elliott and the McKinney capos have replaceable leather pads on the saddles (the area of the capo that contacts the back of the neck of the instrument) to protect the neck from the tension mechanism in the capo. The Elliott's saddle is wider and longer than the McKinney and disperses the pressure the capo places on the bottom of the neck over a wider area and helps keep the capo in place more securely. The saddle mechanism in the Elliott wraps around the body of the capo, whereas the McKinney's saddle is guided through the bottom of the capo. Both mechanisms seem to work very well and are quite stable.

Both capos have removable hard plastic tubing over the top bar. This tubing is what really separates the McKinney and Elliott capos from the other capos. The harder

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the surface contact area, the brighter the sound the capo will produce. Removing the tubing from the McKinney capo is very easy. Simply release the latch on the top bar then slide the tubing off of the bar and replace it with new tubing. The tubing on the Elliott capo is more difficult to remove because the spring loaded release mechanism button on the end of the top bar is larger than the inside diameter of the tubing. The top bar is held in place with a very small Allen screw. However, Phill supplies an extra piece of tubing and a very small Allen wrench to remove the bar.

On to the really important stuff - tone and tuning distortion. Since both capos use similar plastic tubing, they both produce a bright, consistent tone. It's not muffled like the capos that use a soft plastic or rubber covering on the top bar. Both capos use tension mechanisms that exert pressure perpendicular to the neck. So if the player is careful when the capo is clamped on the instrument neck, minimal tuning distortion is possible. Very cool again!

Since we are talking about high-end capos that push the barrier on our preconceived notions, I'd like to pose a couple of questions. How can we get more sustain out of the capo? It seems to me a lighter material won't sustain very well. Would a heavier material sound better? Would a wider top bar with more contact with the strings increase sustain? Inquiring minds want to know.

I believe both capos exhibit extremely fine workmanship and are pretty close to objects of art. What about the cost factor? Well once the player understands the time and precision involved in crafting one of these pieces, it's easier for a cheapskate, such as myself, to justify purchasing one of these beauties. Contact each builder for the current expected delivery time. Which capo do I own? I have two Elliott capos and one McKinney and I love all three!

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A Day In Genoa with Beppe Gambetta

by John Carlini

In December of 1999 I had an opportunity to visit Italy, the land of my paternal ancestors, to perform a solo concert before an audience of appreciative musicians and music lovers. To say this was a thrilling prospect is a major understatement. I will try in this article to share some of the experience with you.

Due to the time of year and other circumstances, I had to leave the US on Thursday and return on Monday! This time crunch actually intensified all that I experienced.

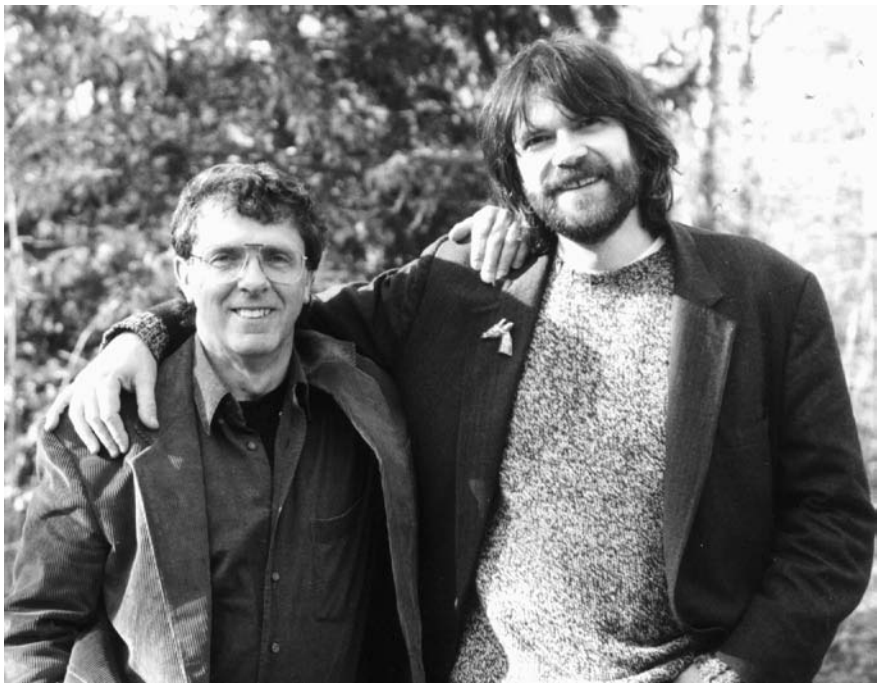
Over the last few years I have had the pleasure of getting to know the wonderful talent and flatpicker (and chef!), Beppe Gambetta. During Beppe's visits to the US we have enjoyed great music and food and he has also helped me to begin to realize my long time desire to learn to speak Italian!

After my Saturday evening concert I had a day off on Sunday. Beppe had invited me to spend the day with him in Genova (the Italian spelling). Of course, I eagerly accepted. My head spins just remembering all that was crammed into that 18 hour sojourn.

Let me say here that in exploring Italy, one could not wish for a better or more knowledgeable guide and host than Beppe Gambetta. He knows and appreciates the history of his country and of all the places and objects of art which he felt were important to show me in so short a time.

Beppe lives in downtown Genoa. For openers, fellow flatpickers, Genoa is the birthplace of Christopher Columbus! I arrived at the apartment around noon. Beppe had been preparing a family style meal, complete with aperitifs, appetizers, salad, meat dish, pasta, wine (of course), dessert, and after dinner drink. Squisito! The only problem was that due to my traveling schedule, my internal clock said 8 AM! But, hey, how often will I have a chance to dine in Genoa under such circumstances? There were about six of us at the table including friends and family. Beppe said, "So. You must to eat!" because he had an agenda planned for our tour later that day.

I want to say something here about our sense of the age of things—as Americans.



John Carlini & Beppe Gambetta

Our country is a little over 200 years old. When we see a building from the 1800's we think of it as old. In Italy, one is immediately thrown into a realization of the time line stretching back. Way back! 500 years! 1000 years! 2000 years!! The hotel I stayed in was 200 years old! The sensing of that reality made me feel as though I was wandering around in some kind of surreal dream.

That feeling had actually begun several days earlier when Beppe picked me up at the airport in Milan for the ride to Varazze, where the concert was being held. As we set out on the highway, I found myself gazing at the Alps in the distance. Wait a minute. Those are the Alps! And I felt the first stirring in my heart for the reality of where I was. For those of you who have been there, you understand that first time feeling. As far as I was concerned, the Alps were some kind of magical mountain range that I had read about in elementary geography, or saw in photos or movies, and so on. But to see the "real deal," even from the airport in Milan, produced an internal "snapshot" which will be with me for life.

After a while, we had to stop at a roadside cafe for cappuccino and a pastry. Of course! And thus, the eating began. Frequent cappuccino stops are part of everyday life in Italy. You "hustle bustle"through the streets for a few hours, then stop in a cafe and enjoy a demitasse for a few moments R-and-R. Then it's off again!

And so we were, back on the road. Beppe would point out certain things, here a 500-year-old building, there a 1000-year-old castle, Roman ruins on the hillside overlooking the Mediterranean Sea. I think that statement warrants being repeated. Slowly. Roman ruins on the hillside overlooking the Mediterranean Sea! And I entered the surreal dream world.

Before long I was checked into the hotel in the beautiful Italian Riviera town of Varazze. A hotel "serving patrons since 1878." Art? Everywhere the eye could see. Ice machine? Soda machine? Forgetaboudit! Out in the maze of streets a kind of low-key flow of activity was happening in and out of shops. And everyone was eating!

That evening I dined alone (food again) at the hotel and enjoyed perhaps the most "civilized" meal I've ever eaten, this due to the exquisite and caring service, absence of stress of any kind, and artistic surroundings.

I watched in awe as my waiter, a tuxedo-clad young man of 18 or so, de-boned and filleted my fish order, grated fresh parmesan cheese over the pasta, and finally brought a plain piece of chocolate cake with a glass of red wine. The combination brought out a wonderful marzipan flavor. This really is sounding more like something you'd read in *Gourmet*, right? But it can1t be helped. Anything you've ever heard about Italy and food is true, and then better. It is an essential part of the Italian experience.

After that sublime meal, Beppe's partner, the incredible mandolinist, Carlo Aonzo, came to drive me to the town of Finale, further up the coast. There we went to a jazz club to hear, meet, and "sit in"with the musicians who were going to be my band for part of the concert the following evening. They were extremely accomplished and natural players. We had a great time playing "free jazz." The concert itself was a big success and real dream come true.

But—on with my story. "So." (as Beppe would begin) Back to the apartment. The meal. "The nap!" And we are walking the streets of Genova.

"You must look through this window." And I squinted into the street-level barred window of a bank (closed on Sunday). "Look up." The domed ceiling, probably 40 feet high, was hand-painted a la Michaelangelo. It was incredible. And the dreamlike quality intensified. And, as suddenly, we found ourselves in a courtyard surrounded by ancient buildings. One of them was a magnificent cathedral. The presence of the buildings produced a feeling of intimacy, as though we were inside. The slightest sounds echoed off the walls. "There is a Rembrandt in this church which you must see." Inside the cathedral, everything...every thing...was a hand-made work of art. I glanced up at the altar...and there it was...a huge painting by Rembrandt! I'll try to explain this. I must have stared at it in some kind of stupor for about one minute. The cliché, "time stood still," suddenly had meaning for me. And then Beppe led me back out to the courtyard. The thing is, I cannot say what the subject of that painting was. The painting pulled me in beyond the subject. I saw, and still see, colors, shades and light flowing down from it. I felt, and still feel, energy being emitting from it. And then, Bam! we were back in the courtyard.

The area was the size of a large cul de sac. It was made of hand-inlaid stones, each of which could easily fit in the palm of your hand. And it was, oh, 500 years old? Older? the stones were white, gray, and black and formed a seascape with waves. And then, of course we were amidst these buildings and the cathedral. Are you feeling the slightest bit surreal yet? Kind of dizzy maybe? I have just the answer. More food!

Maria's trattoria is located in a dark alley in the city and is, hands down, Beppe's favorite eating establishment. Maria herself, close to 80, has been his main cooking influence. That speaks volumes. "When this place is no longer here, Genova will have lost something very unique." We "fought" our way in and up the staircase in order to sit shoulder to shoulder with everyone else who knows and shares the secret of Maria's. I don't recall seeing any tourists in there. "Beppe, please, you order." (Hey, I'm no dummy!) Fresh crusty bread arrived. Fantastico! Fish stew appeared and disappeared. Wow! (Here we go again.) Cheese ravioli with a tiny dollop of sauce. "Is all you need." I mean, this was really incredible! Then, re-fortified, we fought our way down the stairs and out into the dingy alley.

The government buildings in Genoa are enormous stone edifices which appear to be ancient and Roman in design. As we passed by, Beppe pointed out a statue of General Garibaldi on a horse. He said it had been smashed to pieces by Fascists, and that it took many years to restore it. Let me give you an idea of the size of this thing. From where we were, a city block away, we could clearly see it in detail. The closer we got to it, the more difficult it became to see. And when we got right up to it, if we looked straight up, we could see the underside of the pedestal on which it stood! This monument was smashed to bits and reassembled and smoothed out so that we could not see any crack marks. Not one!

The house of Christopher Columbus is an obvious tourist attraction. I was struck by its smallness, its humility and by the ivy and moss which literally covers it. One is transported back in time 500 years to imagine his walking these streets, working, thinking, perhaps having a glass of ale in a local tavern.

Sorry, but before we could go further we had to stop into a cafe for a cappuccino in order to buzz our way into the next phase. In restaurants and cafes in the US, we see lots of 38x10's of celeb's adorning the walls. "Love ya, loved the food, etc." There on the wall of this little inconspicuous cafe was a complimentary note signed by...Guiseppe Verdi. I got dizzy all over again.

"Touch my robe," said the Spirit of Christmas Yet to Come, and we drifted about twenty miles up the Riviera coast to the town of Comogli, where Beppe spent much of his childhood. By now it's probably 9 or 10 PM. But what did I know? I was drifting in and out of scenes like a time traveler in a sci-fi novel. "So." We were walking along a stone inlaid path following a sea wall heading towards a castle ruins from the Middle Ages on the Italian Riviera at 10 o'clock Sunday evening. See? And the whole while Beppe instructed me not to turn around. (Was I going to turn into a pillar of salt?) When we reached the castle he said, "OK. Now turn around and look." How do I explain this one? Did you ever see one of those photos of Porto Fino which is about 6 feet long and a foot high? There was the scene, the ancient pastel colored houses on the hillside, the fishing boats, the lighting (man and God-made), the castle on the hill overlooking the sea which protected this port from invasion in times past. Time for cappuccino. This time with gelato (ice cream).

Then it was "Touch my robe," and suddenly it's going on midnight and we were in a ...well...a bar. In downtown Genoa. I mean way down town. And suddenly my city instincts were awakened. We were to meet a guitar maker who drove the 30 miles from Varazze in order to show us a few of his recent works. The guitars were beautiful and we played music ("Alabama Jubilee") in the tavern and shared the laughter and camaraderie and jokes (and ale) that made a special indelible impression on my soul. And I knew it was time to go.

Ah, but Beppe had one more ace to play out. "We must to go downstairs." Downstairs? OK. One flight under the tavern was yet another, smaller lounge area, this one carved out of rock, with a dirt floor, tables with candles and a small bar. "It is said that this is where Christopher Columbus would come for a glass of ale." Christopher Columbus? I got dizzy again.

And then it was 6 AM and I was on the bus back to the airport in Milano.

Grazie, mi amico, for giving me what no tourist could ever experience. I am richer for it.

Coda

You can share in this authentic Italian food fest through Beppe's artfully prepared book, *Beppe Cooks! Recipes from the Homeland*. In there you will find exact ingrediants and instructions along with beautiful photos and commentary which connect the musical and culinary worlds. Buon Appetito!

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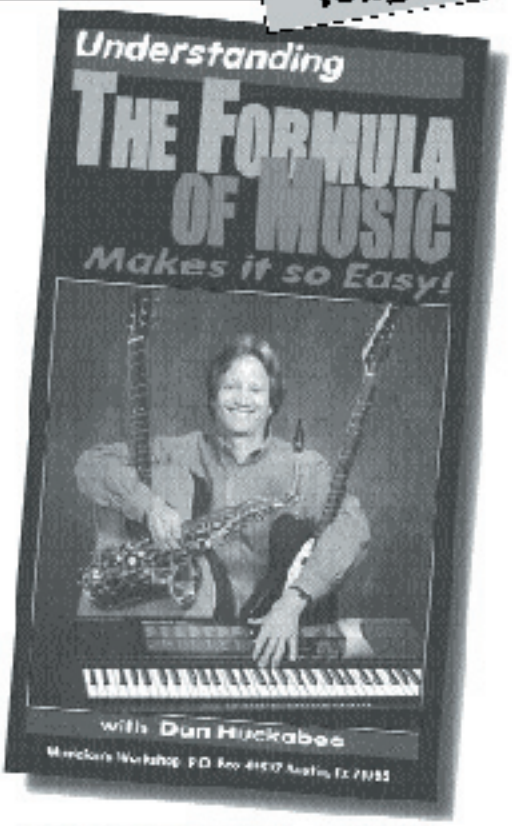

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)I received "Understanding the Formula of Music" on Saturday and immediately watched the whole thing. It answered questions I've been trying to have someone answer for two years. It was $40 well spent. It will take me months to absorb the contents of the video.– *—Bill Weigle, La Feria, TX*

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No matter what instrument you are learning, THIS VIDEO WILL HELP!

Review: August, 1998 American Harmonica by Phil Lloyd

If you're looking for a quick and dirty method to make the most progress on your instrument, one of the best things you could do is watch the video Understanding the Formula of Music, by Dan Huckabee of Musician's Workshop.

Most musicians just want to play songs. They don't want to learn a bunch of theory that has no immediate practical application. That's where Dan comes in. He's put together this two-hour video that explains how music works in layman's terms. You don't need the Pocket Music Dictionary to figure out what he's talking about. He explains and demonstrates everything. All you have to do is pay attention.

If you've been playing music for a while, or working in a band, you may know some of the stuff included in Understanding the Formula of Music, but chances are you don't know all you really need to know, or how the various parts relate to each other.

While the video is designed for the musical novice, there are several points during the program that could prove useful even to the musician who already understands the Formula of music. It could prove useful to teachers who are seeking some ideas of how to tie everything together for their students.

Keep in mind that once you buy the video you are allowed to watch it more than once. This is not like a crash course, where you have to break your back trying to absorb all this material and then face a tough exam the next day. It's one of those videos you might want to watch all the way through and then come back to it a week later, after playing out or practicing or woodshedding.

The idea is for the musician to know enough about how music works to be out of the dark. To be good at your instrument, you don't need four years of college theory: "Too much theory can take all the flavor and personality out of your style," Dan says. He offers the facts, the basics with none of the time-consuming filler.

Dan recommends that the budding musician or even the veteran get an inexpensive keyboard, because the keyboard is the best instrument to illustrate patterns of music. The keyboard is a form of musical diagram itself. That's because—regardless of what instrument you play—you need to know about other instruments for harmony. Dan also demonstrates how music theory works on guitar, another chord instrument. He covers the major scale and explains how it relates to the Nashville Numbering System, which is also used in blues and pop music recording studios.

Dan explains how to build a major scale. Then he shows how once you learn to it a few times-you will have it embedded in your mind's ear. The major scale is the basis for all the other scales and modes, most notably the blues scale and pentatonic scale, used in blues and jazz, as well as pop configurations.

Dan then gets into various chords and how the chords are built from the scale. Obviously, not all of this will be of equal importance to every player, but it makes it easier to learn to recognize the chords that apply to your playing. He focuses on the three chords that most blues players know as the I, IV and V chords (tonic, subdominant and dominant) which are the major part of the Nashville Numbering System.

During the course of the video, you can learn quite a few songs. But most of the songs are used to illustrate a point about a chord change or idea. If you can identify a concept with a familiar song, you are likely to remember that concept. For the novices, this video emphasizes ear training: learning to listen so you know what you are hearing. Knowing what it is, you can play it right back on your own instrument after you hear it with a little practice.

Whether or not you went to music school, there is always something to learn about music and the harmonica. And somehow, knowing more about one always makes it easier to work on the other. There are a number of ways to learn stuff. Trial and Error is real popular. But the problem with enrolling in a seminar of T and E 101 taught by yourself is that you don't know whether you are capering to the Error or the Trial.

Let's face it. There comes a time when even the guys who went into rocket science have to go outside themselves. The point is-as much as we like to pretend that we know everything-there comes a time when we have to seek out the expertise of someone else. Remember, it's not how much you know that counts, but that you know where to look to find what you want or need to know.

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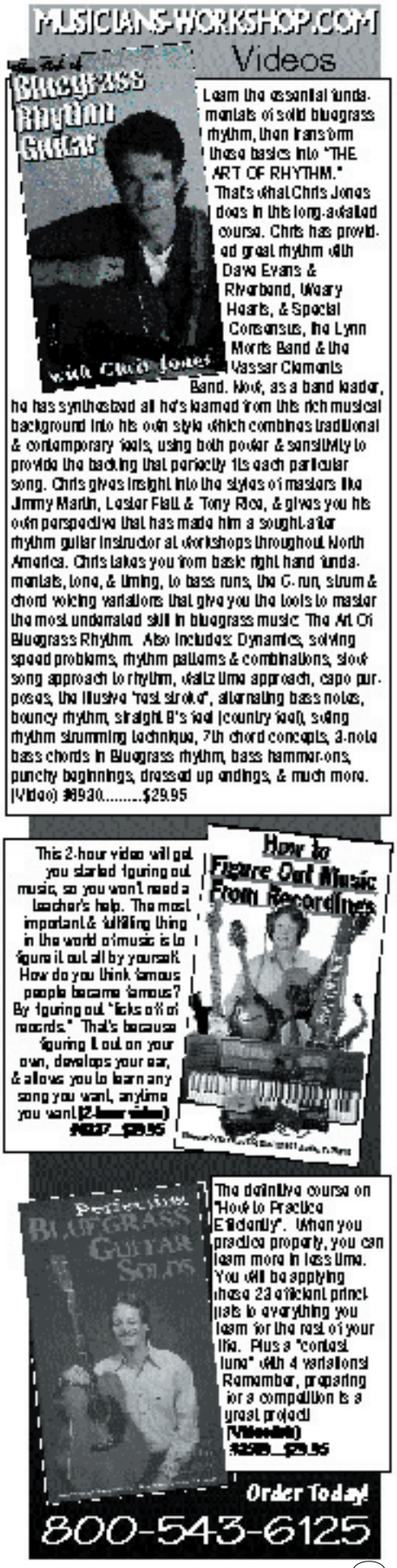
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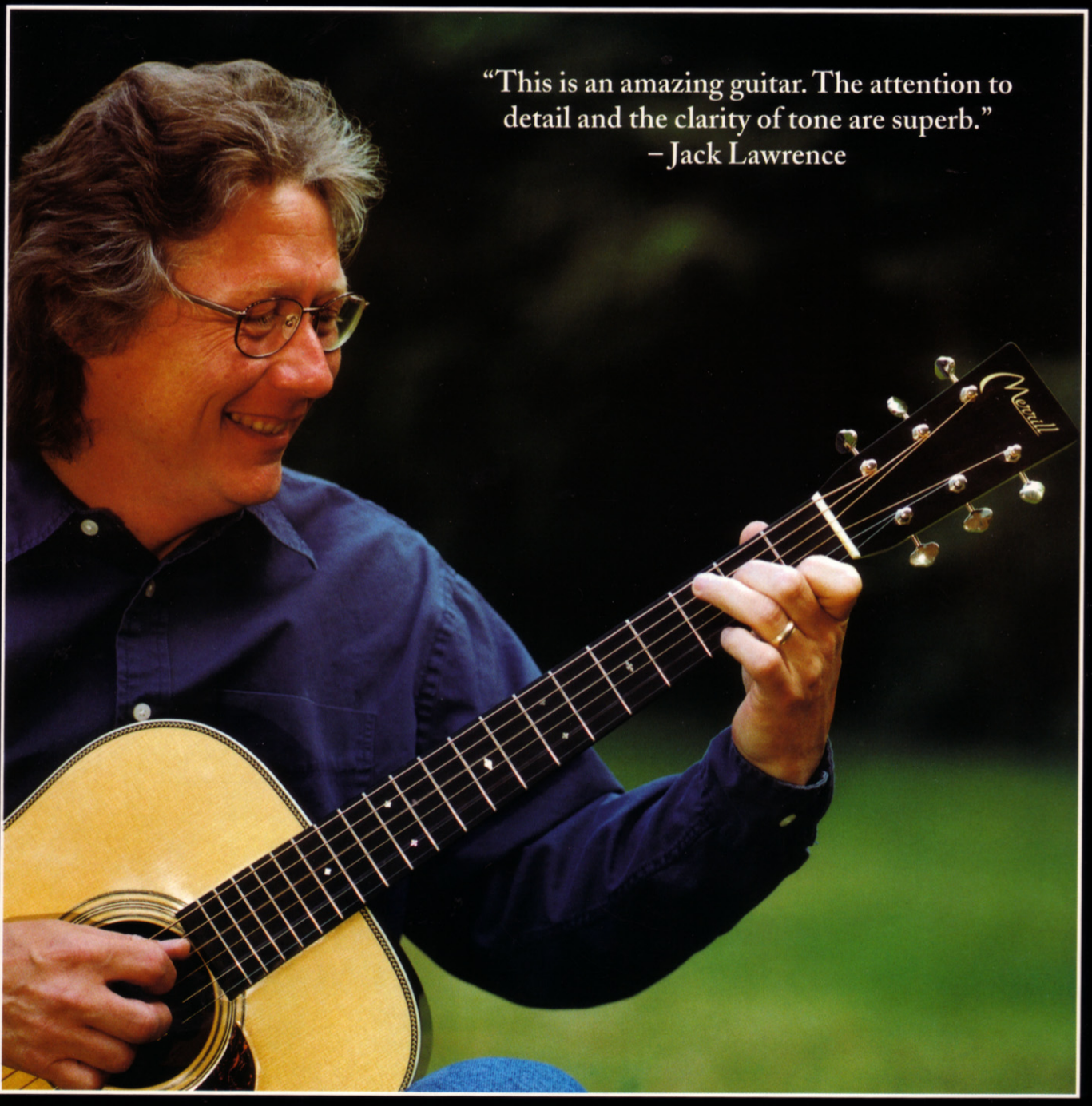

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